

# 50 MOVES

## Chess Hunger Games

Karjakin defeats Svidler to be the last man standing

## Sinquefield Cup

Aronian Back on Top in St Louis (with interview!)

## Road to the World Cup

Max Illingworth talks about life as a chess player

**‘I came here to win’**

Pawn Endgame Studies

IM Junta Ikeda



The Petroff

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Rules of Thumb?

FM Chris Wallis



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**T**He leafy streets of the Central West End in Saint Louis seem an unlikely place to be one of the chess centres of the world, but after the third Sinquefield Cup such claims may not be as far-fetched as they sounded when first made a few years ago.

An affluent suburb about 10 kilometres from the Saint Louis city centre, the Central West End features the three storey Saint Louis Chess Club and Scholastic Centre, an adjoining chess-themed restaurant - the Kingside Diner, the World Chess Hall of Fame across the road and a house for visiting



Article by Ian Rogers

Photography by Cathy Rogers



Grandmaster lecturers nearby – all courtesy of extensive private funding from Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield.

Having hosted multiple US Championships and two previous Sinquefield Cups, the most recent tournament at the Saint Louis CCSC, the second leg of the Grand Chess Tour, was the icing on the cake. The chess world may have been spoilt for super-tournaments in recent years, but the 2015 Sinquefield Cup, with 9 of the top 11 players in the world, pushes it into a category of historic tournaments with no tail, alongside AVRO 1938 and Las Palmas 1996.



## SINQUEFIELD CUP

After his psychological collapse at the first Grand Chess Tour event, Norway Chess, Magnus Carlsen was expected to resume his run of successes but it was Levon Aronian who stole the show.

18 months ago Aronian was seen as Carlsen's likely challenger for the world title, but a disastrous 2014 Candidates tournament saw Aronian's hopes dashed and a gradual fall from grace for the affable Armenian.

Aronian's low point was reached recently when he dropped out of the world's top ten for the first time in a decade.

When Aronian began the 2015 Sinquefield Cup he was ranked ninth of the ten competitors and when Aronian gave a pre-tournament interview saying that he had come to Saint Louis to win, it was viewed as good-humoured braggadocio.

Yet, adopting a new persona of chess caveman, Aronian beat Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So with violent attacks to share the tournament lead as early as Round 4 with early pace-setter Veselin Topalov, who had beaten Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura in the first two rounds. Most of all, Aronian appeared happy; it seemed that his profession was no longer a chore for him.

Topalov faded, as did Carlsen's mid-tournament challenge, leaving Aronian a comfortable winner of the third Sinquefield Cup, a point clear of the field.

Asked to explain his success, Aronian said that his hangover from the 2014 Candidates tournament had lasted long enough and "after so many setbacks, I needed to show to myself that I was still capable of something."

The 32-year-old netted \$US 75,000 for the win, saying that he had not changed his game significantly but merely sought to be more aggressive when the opportunity arose.

Aronian had prepared for the tournament by joining Carlsen in a training camp in Long Island, New York, and the World Champion was one of many who greeted Aronian's win with pleasure, saying "I'm very happy for him - he hasn't played this well for a while and I'm happy he is getting his game together."

Kasparov was even more enthusiastic, tweeting "The chess world is a better place when Aronian is playing well!"

For Carlsen the tournament, while not a disaster like the first Grand Chess Tour tournament in Stavanger, was a source of endless frustration. A repeat first round loss to Topalov - "This time I was beaten fair and square," said Carlsen - was followed by a desperately lucky win against Fabiano Caruana; a game where both players reached move 40 with seconds to spare but it was Caruana who managed to throw away a likely win with his final move of the time control.

A come-back seemed likely as Carlsen reached a tie for first with Aronian after five rounds, but a second loss with White, this time to Grischuk after faltering in a long defensive task, left Carlsen unable to recover.

Last year at the Sinquefield Cup Veselin Topalov had lost his first two games but fought back to reach 50%. In 2015 the Grand Chess Tour leader suffered the reverse fate, winning the first two rounds but still eventually finishing on 50%.

Three other players joined Carlsen in the tie for second. Anish Giri won his first game but then drew eight without going close to winning a game. The tournament's youngest player is becoming one of the hardest players in the world to beat but has yet to seriously threaten for a major tournament title.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave belied his low ranking - he was world number 16 when the tournament started - to cause problems for many opponents and beat



### The player's refreshments room

Topalov convincingly. Vachier-Lagrave felt that Saint Louis together with his solid result in Stavanger showed that he was comfortable among the world's elite; true enough, but his sharp style also leaves room for disappointments (such as Vachier-Lagrave's last place in the Khanty-Mansiysk Grand Prix tournament earlier in 2015).

Hikaru Nakamura can claim to be the most consistent player of 2015 following wins in Gibraltar, Zurich, Khanty Mansiysk and the US Championship, plus second place finishes in Stavanger and the Sinquefeld Cup.

Nakamura's 5/9 score was achieved the hard way, playing 100 more moves than any other competitor. Tough endgame losses to Topalov and Aronian were counterbalanced by wins against Anand and So – the latter game being the tournament brilliancy.

However it was his final round marathon against Grischuk that earned Nakamura the most kudos; the American took great risks but ultimately prevailed after more than six hours. "The last few games have probably taken a few years off my life," said a relieved Nakamura after his last game. "I didn't deserve plus one."

The rest of the field suffered various degrees of disappointment.

Grischuk dropped from second to sixth with his final round loss, while Anand and Caruana never recovered from losing their first two games. Wesley So, 21, has only begun competing in elite tournaments recently and his inexperience showed when he lost three consecutive games mid-tournament, two of them with White.

For all the games please refer to the PGN file.





Above: The entrance to the St Louis chess club  
Below: Spectators in the video viewing room



**Aronian, Levon** 2808

**Caruana, Fabiano** 2765

Sinquefield Cup 2015 (1)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3**

**Be7 5.Bf4 O-O 6.e3 Nbd7 7.c5 Ne4**

"I was not so much expecting this line as hoping for it," admitted Aronian. "7...Ne4 is, I think, an idea of Kasimdzhanov [Caruana's second IR] and Fabiano has played it twice.

**8.Rc1** "Black's idea is to take on c3 and play b6, which will be fine if White has a pawn on c3," said Aronian.

**8...Nxc3 9.Rxc3 b6**



**10.c6** "I really like this position for White," said Aronian, "but maybe that is because I don't understand all the subtleties of the position!"

**10...Nf6 11.a3 a5 12.Bd3 Ne4**

**13.Rc2**

"I considered 13.Rc1 but am quite happy to follow the young people," said Aronian, emulating the retreat played by Giri in a game against Caruana.

**13...f6!?** The first new idea. "Of course 13...Ba6 is playable but after 14.Bxa6 Rxa6 15.Ne5 Bd6 16.Nd7 the knight on d7 is very annoying," explained Aronian. "Giri only drew from this position against Caruana but I had some ideas how to improve."

**14.Qe2!** "Now if I can prevent him from playing ...e5 his bishop on c8 will be dead," explained Aronian.

**14...Bd6 15.O-O g5!?** Played quickly, as had been all Caruana's moves up to this point. "

15...Qe7 was more natural but Caruana had probably seen some deep problem with it," said Aronian.



**16.Bxd6 Nxd6** Diagram

"On 16...Qxd6 I was considering 17.Nd2 Nxd2 18.Rxd2!? Qxc6 19.f4!," said Aronian, "though I would probably only have played this if I worked out the attack to mate!"

**17.Re1!?** Aronian was extremely happy with this move. "White wants to play Nd2 and f4," explained Aronian, "but if 17.Nd2 Black will reply 17...e5 and after 18.e4 my rook is not useful on f1. So I play 17.Re1 and ask Black to find a useful move."

**17...a4 18.Nd2 e5** "He must play this," said Aronian. "If he lets me play f4 his bishop will be dead for the rest of the game. For example after 18...f5 19.f4 g4 the position is blocked but really Black is effectively a piece down and White will eventually win on the kingside."

**19.e4!** Diagram







**Left:**

Aronian got off to a fast start, beating last year's sensation Caruana in front of a large crowd.

**19...f5!?** "I don't trust this move.," said Aronian. "I was expecting 19...exd4 when I analysed 20.exd5!? Re8 21.Qd1 Rxe1+ 22.Qxe1 Ra5 23.Nc4 Rxd5 24.Nxd6 Rxd6 25.Re2 Kf8 26.Qb4 and thought that I might still have some pressure. Then I wondered whether I have time for 20.Rcc1! when I couldn't see a good way for Black to respond."

**20.f3! dxe4?!**

"This must be wrong," said Aronian. "Certainly 20...exd4 21.exd5 ( 21.e5!? ) 21...Re8 22.Qd1 Rxe1+ 23.Qxe1 Ra5 24.Nc4 Rxd5 25.Nxd6 Rxd6 26.Re2 Kf8 27.Qb4 is more difficult for Black than the previous line, because the f5-pawn gets in the way.

"However 20...Re8 21.Qf2 will

probably lead to something similar.

**21.fxe4 Ra5 22.exf5! "**

22.dxe5 Rxe5 23.Nf3 is probably also good but I wanted to open up against Black's king," said Aronian. "By now I had the feeling that I would win within another 10 moves."

**22...Nxf5 23.Bc4+!**

23.dxe5 Nd4 24.Qh5 Bf5 was not convincing enough for Aronian.

**23...Kg7 24.d5! Re8?** Played after only 7 seconds thought and soon regretted. "

24...Nd6! 25.Qxe5+ Qf6 was the most persistent and would have spoiled my plan of winning in 10 moves," admitted Aronian.

**25.Ne4! Nd4** Diagram

"I thought that 25...Nd6 was the best defence but after 26.Nxd6 Qxd6 27.Rf1! Black lacks the single tempo he needs to finally develop his bishop," said Aronian.

**26.Qh5! Nxc2** Based on a miscalculation but it is too late to go back. "I thought that 26...Bf5 was the best chance," said Aronian, "but after 27.Rf2 Bg6 28.Qh3 I would be very happy."

**27.Nxg5 Bf5** Diagram

27...Nxe1 walks into the pretty finish. 28.Qxh7+ Kf6 29.Ne4#!

**28.Rf1!!** The point behind White's sacrifice - temporarily staying a rook down.

28.Qf7+ Kh6 29.Qxf5 Qxg5 30.Qxc2 was certainly not White's idea.



**28...Qf6** "Fabiano said that after 28...Bg6 29.Rf7+ Kg8 he missed 30.Qh6!," explained Aronian, "Though I also thought that 30.d6 Bxh5 31.Rxc7+ Bf7! 32.Nxf7 might be winning." On that small point Aronian was wrong - after 32...Qh4! Black turns the tables. "Anyway," added Aronian, "you don't need a queen sacrifice when you can mate in two."



**29.Ne6+** "I saw I had a million wins, but as my mother says, 'A caravan camel gets the urge to dance when he's approaching a bridge over water,'" explained Aronian.

29.Rxf5 Qxf5 30.Ne6+ Kf6 31.Qxe8 was also crushing.

**29...Rxe6 30.Rxf5 Qg6 31.dxe6 Qxh5 32.Rxh5 Nd4 33.e7**

"Here I saw a beautiful geometrical win," said Aronian, "though almost anything wins, for example 33.Bd3 h6 34.e7 Ra8 35.Rxe5 Re8 36.Re4 when the knight cannot go to f5."

If 36...Nf5 37.Rg4+ Kf6 38.Rf4 wins. I.R.

**33...Ra8 34.Rxe5 Re8 #**

**35.Re4! Nf5**

35...Nxc6 36.Bb5 is similarly disastrous for Black.

**36.Be6! Nd6**

On 36...Nxe7 37.Bd7 wins.

**37.Bd7! Nxe4 38.Bxe8 Kf6 39.Bg6!**

**1-0**

**Carlsen, Magnus 2853**

**Topalov, Veselin 2816**

Sinquefield Cup 2015 (1)

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.O-O Nf6 5.Re1 a6 6.Bd3 b5 7.c4!?**

**7...g5!**

7...g5 is a very interesting move - I couldn't find a clear way to play after that," admitted Carlsen.

7...g5 was first suggested by David Smerdon in February 2014 when analysing a Carlsen-Nakamura game for Chesspublishing.com, and that article had been noted by Topalov's seconds at the time while preparing for the 2014 Candidates tournament. The only other high level game after 7.c4 had seen Nakamura play 7...Ne5 but after 8.Bf1 Nxc4 ( 8...Bg4 ?! 9.cxb5! ) 9.a4!

White had considerable pressure for the pawn.

**8.Nxg5 Ne5 9.Be2 bxc4 10.Na3**

10.f4 Nd3 11.Bxd3 cxd3 gives Black good play because a forcing attempt such as 12.e5?! dxe5 13.fxe5 Qd4+ 14.Kh1 Ng4 15.Qf3 does not force Black to take a perpetual check



## Carlsen had another tough tournament following his poor performance at Norway Chess

because 15...Rb8! 16.Qxf7+ Kd8 leaves White in trouble.

10.Nf3 was the most sober response, though Black retains compensation after 10...Nd3 11.Bxd3 cxd3 "I couldn't decide whether to go for the normal option or sacrifice a piece," admitted Carlsen, who spent almost half an hour on this move.

**10...Rg8**



**11.Nxc4!?**

A fantastic idea, prepared by a long think on the previous move. "I knew I was going to sacrifice a piece when I played 10.Na3 but I wasn't playing

very practically," said Carlsen. "I suspected that it might not be good but I thought that I wouldn't be much worse even in the worst case. I was also taking my opponent's style into account. However I should have played it quickly to have more time at critical junctures later."

Topalov was more sceptical; "It's not what White's supposed to do on move 10, be a piece down and fighting for equality."

**11...Nxc4 12.d4 Nb6 13.Bh5!**

13.dxc5! dxc5 14.Bh5 is a more



annoying move order but will likely transpose to the game.

**13...Nxb5 14.Qxb5 Rg7 15.Nxb7**



"As soon as I played this I saw that his answer would be 15...Qd7!, not threatening 16...Qg4 as I had expected but 16...Qh3 which is much stronger," explained Carlsen.

**15...Qd7!** The most testing continuation for White.

15...Rxb7 16.Qxb7 cxd4 is fine for Black but White retains some trumps in Black's weak king and the passed h-pawn.

**16.dxc5 dxc5 17.e5?**



Attempting to set up Nf6+ tricks, but Topalov handles the threats perfectly. "I needed to accept that I was not better and play more solidly," admitted Carlsen. Most humans would be very reluctant to play 17.Nxf8! allowing 17...Qh3! 18.Qxb3 Bxb3 19.g3 but, despite the semi-trapped knight, "I think I would still be perfectly fine then," said Carlsen.

**17...Qc6!** Missed by Carlsen.

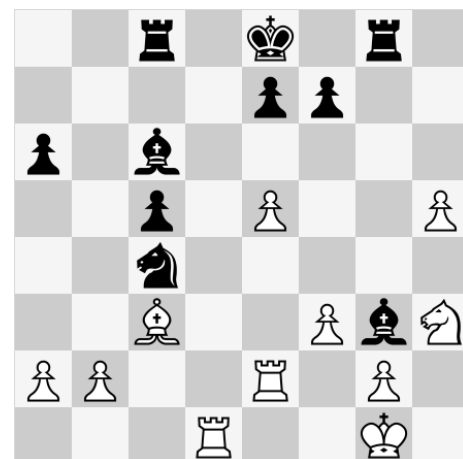
17...Qh3? would allow a Carlsen trick via 18.Nf6+! Kd8 19.Rd1+ Kc7 20.Ne8+ while on 17...Qg4 18.Nf6+! exf6 19.exf6+ Be6 20.fxg7 Qxb5 21.g8=Q O-O-O 22.Qg5! holds the balance.

**18.f3 Qg6 19.Nf6+**



**19...Kd8!** Suddenly the queens must be exchanged, White's attack is over and he must defend a near hopeless endgame.

**20.Qxg6 Rxb7 21.Ne4 Bb7 22.h4 Rc8 23.h5 Rg8 24.Bd2 Nc4 25.Bc3 Bh6 26.Rad1+ Ke8 27.Rd3 Bf4 28.Nf2 Bc6 29.Nh3 Bg3 30.Re2 Bb5 31.Rd1 Bc6**



**32.Nf2?!** "I still should have had chances to resist but a couple of stupid blunders made it easy for him," sad Carlsen.



Nakamura won the battle against his new compatriot

32.Rd3 would at least force Toplov to find a new winning plan.

**32...Bxe5!** "In time trouble he let me do everything," said Toplov.

**33.Ng4**

33.Bxe5 Bxf3 and 33.Rxe5 Nxe5 34.Bxe5 Bxf3 are both hopeless for White

**33...Bxc3 34.bxc3 Kf8 35.Kf2** With only one pawn for the piece there is little reason to play on but both players were in time trouble so

Carlsen decides to play on until the time control.

**35...Rh8 36.Ne5 Nxe5 37.Rxe5 Be8 38.g4 f6 39.Re6 Bb5 40.Rde1 Rc7**

**0-1**

**So, Wesley 2779**

**Nakamura, Hikaru 2814**

Sinquefield Cup 2015

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6**

"I haven't played the King's Indian very often recently," said Nakamura. "My former coach Kasparov decided long ago that it wins for White thanks to all his brutal losses to Kramnik!"

**5.Nf3 O-O 6.Be2 e5 7.O-O Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3!? f5**





Above: Nakamura with his girlfriend Mariagrazia De Rosa  
Below: Anish Giri with his wife Sopiko Guramishvili



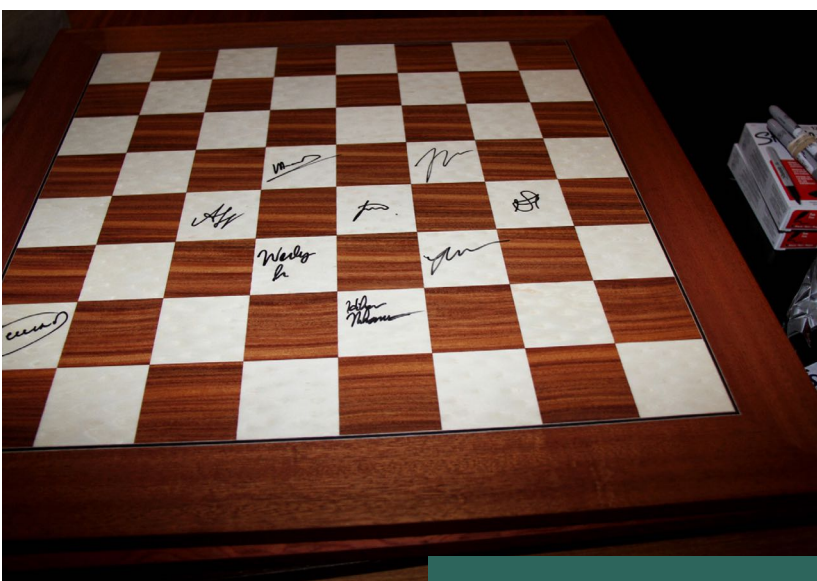




The St Louis chess museum







Autograph signing with the players.







**11.Be3!?** “When choosing the King’s Indian I expected Wesley to go for something more calm,” confessed Nakamura. It is already too late for 11.Nd3 ?! as 11...f4 leads to a superior version of the main line for Black.

However 11.g4 is more popular than Korchnoi’s favourite plan with 10 or 11.Be3.

**11...f4 12.Bf2 g5 13.Nd3** A small surprise for Nakamura.

13.a4 is the main line, but So had scored well in the recent past with both 13.Rc1 and 13.g4!.

**13...Ng6** The original game with this line, an Averbakh v Bronstein encounter from the 1952 Soviet Championship, saw the cruder 13...Rf6 14.c5 Rh6. While dangerous, the ...Qe8-h5 plan is considered insufficient for Black and Bronstein lost the aforementioned game.

**14.c5 Nf6 15.Rc1 Rf7**



**16.Kh1** A waiting move; Nakamura had already faced 16.a4 which also hopes Black will play ...h5. The problem for White is that the direct 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.Nb5 allows Black to play 17...g4! without ...h5, and that means that ...g3 will come with extra effect because the h5-square is available to the f6-knight.

**16...h5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.Nb5 a6 19.Na3**

19.Na7!? is the sort of move Korchnoi used to get away with, but here after 19...Bd7 20.Qb3 g4 Black’s attack proceeds quickly.

**19...b5 20.Rc6** The first new move; by now So had used only 3 minutes while Nakamura had started thinking two moves earlier.

**20...g4** “If Wesley keeps playing quickly I think I will be in trouble,”

confessed Nakamura, “but if he keeps thinking I think I am going to do very well. But anyway, I am going to try to mate him!” (Nakamura will have been well pleased that So spent 7 minutes on his next move and an hour on the next four.)

**21.Qc2 Qf8!? 22.Rc1 Bd7**



**23.Rc7?** “I think that Wesley just needs to learn to prepare better. There are a lot of lines like this in the King’s Indian where the computer will say something like +2, but in such a position it is very easy to go wrong,” said Nakamura after the game. “In fact I didn’t see much play for him after 21.Qc2 and 22.Rc1.”

23.Nb4! is the critical choice after which 23...Bxc6 24.dxc6 gives White considerable play, so it is more likely that Nakamura would have gone for 23...g3!? 24.Bg1 ( 24.hxg3 fxg3 25.Bxg3 h4 26.Bf2 h3! gets very scary for White. )



24...gxh2 25.Bf2 when the outcome of the kingside v queenside race is still up in the air.

**23...Bh6! 24.Be1 h4! 25.fxg4**



**25...f3! 26.gxf3 Nxe4! 27.Rd1 ?!** An inconsequential move which took So 30 minutes, but it seems that nothing is sufficient any more. "I was shocked that he played this after thinking for so long.

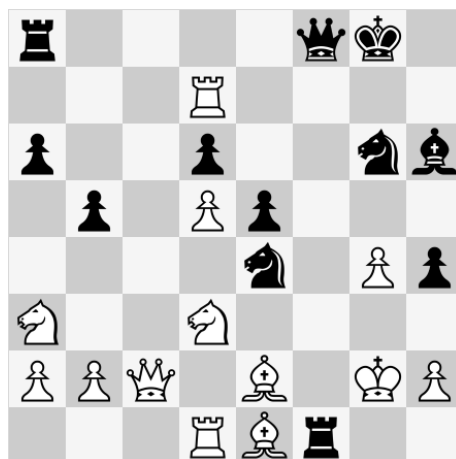
27.Rxd7 was the only try, but after 27...Rxf3 28.Bxf3 Qxf3+ 29.Qg2 Qxd3 30.Rd1 and now the computer said 30...Bd2 !! but I had looked at 30...h3! [The same move Anand had suggested in the commentary room. IR] and I think Black wins," said Nakamura. Play could continue 31.Rxd3 hxg2+ 32.Kg1 Nc5 winning back the exchange with advantage.

27.Nb4 suggested by Vachier-Lagrave, trying to set up a skewer along the c2-g6 diagonal, is also

insufficient after 27...Rxf3! 28.Qxe4 Rf1+ 29.Kg2 h3+! 30.Kxh3 Nf4+ 31.Kg3 Rg1+ and White will soon be mated.

It should be noted that 27.fxe4 loses directly to 27...Rf1+ 28.Kg2 Be3! threatening ...h3+ and...Qh6+.

**27...Rxf3 28.Rxd7 Rf1+ 29.Kg2**



**29...Be3!** Missed by So, yet there are plenty of alternative wins, the most beautiful being 29...h3+ 30.Kxh3 Rf2 !! (Or) 30...Rg1! or 30...Rxe1! 31.Rxe1 Qf2 !! (31.Bxf2 Qxf2 !!).

"I saw some ideas like this but I couldn't make it work," admitted Nakamura, a little annoyed that he had not found this line and finished off the game with 32.Nxf2 Nf4+ 33.Kh4 Bg5#!

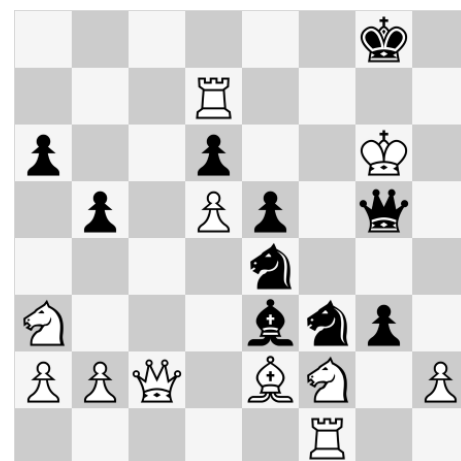
**30.Bg3 hxg3! 31.Rxf1 Nh4+ 32.Kh3 Qh6! 33.g5 Nxg5+ 34.Kg4**



**34...Nh4!**

Now the threat of 35...Qh3+ forces a quick mate, which So sportingly allows.

**35.Nf2 Qh4+ 36.Kf5 Rf8+ 37.Kg6 Rf6+! 38.Kxf6 Ne4+ 39.Kg6 Qg5**



**0-1**

## CROWDS

Aronian, like many other players in Saint Louis, expressed his pleasure at playing in front of an enthusiastic crowd – a rarity when so many top events are held more for the internet audience than for local fans.

The autograph signing days attracted more than 300 fans with memorabilia of all kinds. Though signing autographs was not what most of the players would have preferred to be doing the day before a big tournament, it was a small price to pay for generating an atmosphere of enthusiasm and interest, an atmosphere which permeated the playing hall and the nearby commentary venues.





# GRAND CHESS TOUR

At the closing press conference, Garry Kasparov admitted that the Grand Chess Tour had suffered some teething troubles in its first year.

However with two of the three Tour events held so far, it seems clear that the benefits of bringing the world elite together outweigh any technical flaws in the Tour concept.

The scoring system, especially breaking ties in favour of the player with most losses, needs some improvement . Having Topalov (first and sixth in the first two Tour events) leading the Tour standings ahead of Nakamura (two ties for second) is weird. However using a system which favours inconsistency has had the side-effect that Carlsen's chances of winning the 2015 Tour are

still alive, a boon for the London organisers and the Norwegian television broadcasters.

Plans for expansion of the Grand Tour to four or even six tournaments are on hold because the 2016 calendar is so crowded, with a Candidates tournament, Olympiad and world title match in the same year.

The 2016 Grand Tour will invite the top three finishers from the 2015 Tour plus the next six highest rated players for the 2016 tour. In 2015 only Vladimir Kramnik declined his invitation, but in a busy 2016 there is a risk of more top players sitting out the Grand Tour.

## Below:

The World Chess Hall of Fame is worth a visit



## PAWN SACRIFICE

At the end of the tournament a special screening of the Hollywood film *Pawn Sacrifice* was arranged at the players' hotel, the Chase Park Plaza. Guests included Garry Kasparov and the film's producer Gail Katz, who also answered questions at the end of the film.

For most of the Sinquefield Cup players Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky are merely historical figures like Capablanca and Morphy; Anand is the only one of the Sinquefield 10 who has played Spassky, and he also met Fischer in Iceland.

Rather than document the milestones of Fischer's journey to the top of world chess as the documentary *Bobby Fischer Against the World* had done, *Pawn*

*Sacrifice* centres around the development of Fischer's mental illness; paranoia in particular.

When asked if he liked the film or not, Garry Kasparov's short comment was "Could be worse." He explained "My main worry is if the film promotes chess or not," clearly fearing that the answer was not.

Kasparov also took issue with the screenwriters' choice of game 6 of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match as pivotal and, according to the film "still regarded as the greatest game of all time".

"There were two great games in the 1972 match – games 10 and 13 – which could have been the climax of the film," said Kasparov.



**Left:**

A screenshot from the film "*Pawn Sacrifice*", starting Liev Schreiber as Boris Spassky and Toby Maguire as Bobby Fischer.



## ULTIMATE MOVES

As soon as the tournament finished the younger players relaxed with late nights of lightning and bughouse chess, and all joined in for the organised mayhem of Ultimate Moves.

The 10 GMs were split into teams, with Yasser Seirawan and Rex Sinquefield added to one side, and Kasparov and Rex's son Randy to the other.

Tandem chess is notoriously difficult and here doubly so with so many GMs generating ideas and the certainty that everything would be ruined when Rex Sinquefield and Randy took over each side at a critical moment.

While the purists groaned, the games were entertaining and the players could be seen at their most relaxed with the Saint Louis Chess Club alive with chess clock assaults and laughter. With all the work required to become a world class player, it was great to see that the world's best GMs have not forgotten how much fun it is to just play chess.



Top left: Maurice Ashley clearly enjoyed commenting Top right: Seirawan battles Kasparov  
Bottom: Even the world's best play transfer

# LEVON ARONIAN SPEAKS

“I AM JUST A GOOD PLAYER”

A

fter his win of the 2105 Sinquefeld Cup, Levon Aronian spoke to Ian Rogers about his career, from his youth as the Soviet Union collapsed to recovering from failure at the 2014 Candidates tournament.

## EARLY YEARS – CHECKERS AND CHESS

I was born in Yerevan and that's where I live now.

I learned chess at eight and a half. I was a sick child – not too sick ; flu, small things. My older sister taught me because I was really bored.

My maternal grandpa had tried to teach me earlier but I never liked chess because it was too complex. I liked checkers. There are pictures of me at chessboards when I was four or five, playing checkers. I would keep on asking guests to come and play checkers with me and anybody who would visit – colleagues of my dad or mum – they would have to play me.

So in 1991 I started to play; these were Soviet times, just, and I went to the House of Pioneers. It was normal in Soviet times to be in a Pioneer Palace. Teachers would get paid by the government, though the salary wasn't exciting.

At the Pioneer Palace there was a teacher who taught me how the pieces move properly. From this lady I got to know how to castle properly and the en passant rule. I came up with these puzzles – mates in 1 - and I really thought I am so brilliant. I didn't know anybody else who could create such brilliancies. Not that anybody was impressed, but the kids in the group were very kind to me.

## THE END OF THE USSR

The daughter of my teacher was about to get married to a guy who was a refugee from Baku – he was a very strong player. At that time he didn't have any titles but he was regularly playing in the highest league of Armenia. His name was Melik Khachiyan, he was 10 years older than me and he was my trainer at the time. Then something happened and they never got married. He graduated so he couldn't stay in the university dorm. When the collapse of the Soviet Union started my parents told him 'if you want you can stay in our house.' My parents had been paying him as my trainer but now he stayed in the house and they didn't pay him. Melik lived with us for 5 years and he was like a brother to me.





Interview by Ian Rogers  
Photos by Cathy Rogers



## When the Soviet Union collapsed, I stopped going to school.

My dad is from Belarus and didn't speak good Armenian, so we spoke Russian at home and I was going to Russian school. My Armenian was pretty bad. Armenia needed to build a national movement but unfortunately this national movement was anti-Russian, as everywhere [in the ex-Soviet states]. All the Russian schools were closed - there were only two Russian language schools that were open and they were in the centre. We lived in a poor area quite far from the centre of Yerevan; in the winter public transport was very bad and the trip to school was killing. So I never went to school after the break up of the Soviet Union. I wasn't home schooled; I was just playing chess. I am a bookworm but I can't really say this was home schooling.

So mostly Melik and I were just working together. He had no title but from day one I had an IM level player for training. In the USSR every city had its chess school; it comes from generations of teachers teaching students, students becoming teachers, etc, etc. You have the Moscow school, [the Baku school]. What they call the Soviet Chess School doesn't really exist. Because of the war we had many Armenian chessplayers from Baku coming to Yerevan, Shakarov's students. Melik was one; he became a GM and now lives in the US.

## PLAYING INTERNATIONALLY

In 1992 I played in the first Armenian Championship for 10 year olds and by winning that I qualified to play in Duisburg at the World Youth Championships. I played badly but it was insane, like going to a different planet; having soft drinks and chocolate. People from the Soviet

Union were going nuts. I was drinking so much Sprite and Fanta I think I exceeded my limits.

I improved a lot over the two years because I was training with a very strong coach and in 1994 I won the World U/12 Championship in Szeged.

Two years later I was in a youth team at the Yerevan Olympiad. There was Asrian, Mirumian and me; it was a pretty good team. I never had doubts that I should make it as a chessplayer - I didn't really have any choice. I had no other profession so I had to make it. My parents, especially my mother dedicated all of her time to find help like getting me sponsors and coaches.

**'I was always ignoring material... sacrificing things and not caring'**

Melik got married so he moved out but by then we were training only a little together. We trained intensively for 3 years but from the age of 13 to 15 I was just stagnating.- not really improving. Then I had some time training with Arsen Yegiazarian. He was responsible for many many

Armenian players. We had three main coaches in Armenia in the 1990s: Nadanian, Yegiazarian and Khachian. Everyone was their student at some time in their life.

From a very early age I had very good calculation, pretty good tactical vision, fantasy, but I was always ignoring material - I was always sacrificing things and not caring.

Then I was lucky enough to have the chance to train with Arshak Petrosian; just a month but it had a great impact on me. Arshak taught me to appreciate the games of players who played positionally, and added some subtlety to my play. But one month of course was not that much but I could feel that this was also a type of chess school.





**Aronian was understandably relaxed after winning the tournament**

That change in attitude caused me to ask Gabriel Sargissian to start training with me; he became my coach and best friend. He is younger than me and was much lower rated but I started understanding that he is a very strong player, his positional understanding is on a world class level . He is strategically very talented; he feels where pieces should be placed, whether pieces should be exchanged or not. Most of the things I have learned from the age of 16 until even now, I learned from him. I kept my tactical skills and I took his positional knowledge from him. He was my biggest influence.

In 1999 I joined a Bundesliga team, Wattenscheid; this was a big deal for me. The pay wasn't great but I played on board one so this was a chance to play against people whom I would never dream of playing, like Kasimdzhanov – very strong players. Arshak Petrosian's daughter Sophie

spoke German and she got into negotiations and found me a team. She rooted for me because I was Arshak's student and Arshak's family treated me like a son.

## MOVING TO GERMANY

I moved to Germany in 2001 because I got upset with my national federation for not including me in our national team. I had an agreement with the head of the Federation; if I win the Armenian Championship I will be in the team. Then Gabriel and I shared first place and he said one of you cannot go. Gabriel played in the 2002 Bled Olympiad. However even in Istanbul 2000 I should have been included, so this was a long-standing complaint. I was on the outer with the Federation and I felt that no matter how strongly I played I would never get into the Armenian team.

Around the same time I lost one of my sponsors. He was a businessman giving money so I could survive playing chess, about 1700 per month. Then something happened. I believe his son passed away and he said he couldn't help me any more. However, he did so in a very frustrating way. He said "I will help you" and we said "Ok, great, thank you". Then he wrote a message that said 'I will help you by telling you that you cannot get help from me any more because you are a strong player and you have to help yourself.'

I was getting \$500 a month and I have to support my family. At that time to fly to a tournament from Armenia I had to take a loan from somebody. After the fall of the Soviet Union it had been impossible for my parents to get jobs as scientists. In the last round of a tournament I would be shaking – I could never just control my emotions. But in Germany you could just take a train everywhere – it was really easy.

So my whole family moved to Berlin. My father is Jewish; a big part of Belarus was populated by Jewish people and most of my father's family were killed [in WWII] so Germany accepted them. My father is a very adventurous man, he took work as an electrician, then he tried all kinds of things to earn money in Yerevan but it just wasn't stable. Germany was better for my parents. Even there it was very difficult to find work as they were already over 55, but they could get State help. They didn't have any German but they learnt quickly.

Based in Berlin, I started playing in lots of open tournaments and I started winning them without big problems. I didn't get any invitations to elite tournament during this time – I made my way up through my rating. My first invitation to a super-tournament, Wijk aan Zee 2006, came

after I won the World Cup.

I changed Bundesliga teams when I became a stronger player, over 2700. Then I decided to play for a Berlin team. First it was Kreuzberg, playing for fun – I didn't get paid. Then I moved to Schachfreunde Berlin.

I was always trying to fight against Baden Baden, to find a team which could play against them but I waited and waited and when none came along I just joined them! I am happy at Baden Baden – I like playing in the team and Mr Grenke is a great guy. He is always very happy and he loves chess.

**'In the last round of a tournament I would be shaking'**

That is what I really love in people who sponsor a tournament when they just can sit there, watch the game, they are not intrusive – it's just respect and love towards the games.

I always believed that Armenia could win the Olympiad in Turin in 2006; I never had any illusions about how good we were. Most of our players were underrated; at that time Gabriel was barely 2600. It also wasn't a surprise that we won two more Olympiads, though it was a slightly different team because unfortunately Karen [Asrian] passed away. The core of the team hadn't changed much and it still hasn't changed much. We won with every scoring system – 2006 was still a [game] points system.

## **THE 2014 CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT, FROM FAVOURITE TO ALSO-RAN**

The fact is that I didn't manage to play well in the most important tournament. At the 2014 Candidates tournament in Khanty Mansiysk I believe I underestimated Anand. I said to myself, "OK, I will slowly win this tournament." Then at one moment when we were equal he



started winning and I think pressure got me and I started playing my worst chess. It was really unpleasant losing the last round even when I wasn't fighting for anything. It felt really bad.

At that time I had a whole lot of people working for me and I was trying to accomplish a lot but I have learned it doesn't really work this way. This was a mistake and I rely much less on seconds nowadays. You have to control things yourself more. Now I have only one person who is a permanent second – Ashot Nadanian

The rest of the year I did feel like playing and I was trying to give my best but something was dragging me back. It happens.

However the Tromso Olympiad was dreadful [for Armenia]. Some of the guys are becoming less ambitious. They are getting satisfied – though that doesn't include me; I am never satisfied. Fortunately there are some young players coming through. Karen Gregoryan is a good player.

## ON WORKING WITH ALEX WOHL IN 2009/10

Alex is a good friend of mine. He's jovial. I've always liked him as a person. He made me happy and he made me fight. He was not just a second but also a psychologist. Actually some of the variations we worked on I still use to this day. I analysed a lot with him and did some valuable chess with him. Sometimes I would tell him, "OK Alex I am not going to teach you about this position. I know you have a different opinion." We had some fights sometimes but we had a really good relationship. I enjoyed his company. And the road trips were fantastic. Alex loves nature as much as I do.

## ARIANNE CAOILI

[My fiancée] Arianne [Caoili] is good for me because she is ambitious and I think we understand each other very well. Very early on she told me I am too relaxed, that I shouldn't be fighting for the top 10, I should be trying to be number one. It was good to be with someone as ambitious as that.

Arianne works in Yerevan now. Her official job is consulting a big government project and also she has a consultancy. She will eventually work for herself in the private sector.

Her previous job was in Australia and it was a difficult decision for her to move from that very good job with a very good salary to Armenia. Before then she was studying in a European business school in Germany.

Of course it is difficult to spend a lot of time apart but it would be much harder for me if she was just following me to every

tournament, looking me in the eye and saying you play well or you play badly. I come from a family where both parents are very independent – very motivation driven, very active – so it was kind of natural for me to look for a partner like her.

Two years ago we moved back to Yerevan. My family is still in Berlin and I try to navigate to get back there regularly.

‘ It would be much harder for me if she was just following me to every tournament ’



**Left:**

Levon was accompanied in St Louis by his fiancée, Australian chessplayer Arianne Caoilli

## THE SINQUEFIELD CUP

Saint Louis is great and it's fantastic to have chess at such a level in the US. Generally the public is very excited. I can see that chess is popular in the US and social media is much more active here than in Europe. Every tournament in the United States gets much more coverage in my opinion than anywhere else - people watching on Twitter.

I also prefer a tournament with crowds, like the Sinquefield Cup not one just for internet, though when you play chess you don't really see the atmosphere much because you are concentrating. In Armenia we have huge crowds watching chess whenever there is a super-tournament. My match against Kramnik in 2007 was insane – I have never seen so many people watching chess. We had about 4000 people watching and there were people outside the opera house waiting to get in.

The field here this year was very strong, of course, though a year ago also it was a very strong event. However when

you have different players then I think there is more excitement and we had lots of blood, which is good. Guys like Wesley [So] play not so many super tournaments so this is a big chance. I was fighting from the first game to the last. I enjoyed my tournament because of that; I love watching top games but I love to play much more.

Before the Sinquefield Cup I trained with Ashot and I also had a good training session with Magnus. My Wattenscheid and now Baden Baden team-mate Peter Nielsen invited me. We share a long history as team-mates. Magnus and I did physical sports, played some blitz, things like this. You don't really need to go crazy before a tournament.

They were asking me questions before the tournament and I told them honestly that I came here to win. So I didn't have huge excitement after winning my first game; I thought +4 would be needed to win the tournament.

I barely survived this game against Grischuk but I feel I should have won against Giri because the position was



heavenly. That game really made me sad. Some players are brilliant defenders and maybe Giri is of that breed. I am definitely not - I don't like to defend, starting from move number one!

It always felt that I had a huge advantage against Hikaru [Aronian's key Round 7 win IR]. I know all the computer's assessments but during the game it didn't feel like I was making mistakes. So even if he exchanges pieces, the time will come when my king will come to the queen-side and his a5-pawn is going to feel very uncomfortable.

I only was fairly sure that I would win the tournament after the [penultimate] round. Before that game, against Vishy, I thought if I make a draw somebody can win two games in a row - you never know. Against Vishy I went for a fight; it was an interesting game and he played well. After I saw that everyone else had drawn I was confident I would win the tournament.

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP HOPES

At the World Cup in Baku I will try my best to qualify for the Candidates tournament. This is a very different story to the 2013 Tromso World Cup because there I was already qualified by rating.

The openings play a big role in a knock-out tournament. There are very few people that you can beat in the classical phase. With guys of 2650 you may win with White but it's not guaranteed and with Black if they want to make a draw they'll definitely do it.

I don't mind playing rapids if I have to.

***So you are a good rapid player?***

I am just a good player!

### Right:

A big smile as he poses for a shot with his fans



# Pawn Endgames

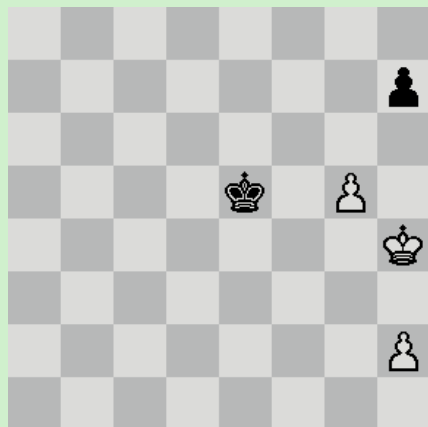
By IM Junta Ikeda

The theme for the studies in this issue is Back to Basics – Pawn Endgames, studies where there are only the kings and pawns in the starting position. Many of you are bound to be acquainted with the ideas of opposition, outflanking and corresponding squares – but this is only the tip of the iceberg in the fertile, all-encompassing world of pawn endgames. While theoretical endgame knowledge is a plus here, often it is all about concrete calculation – who will win the pawn race, how can I put my opponent in zugzwang, what is the right path for the king to follow, should I push my pawn two squares or only one here? In this issue, the stipulation is White to play and win in Studies #1-#4, and White to play and draw in Studies #5 and #6. The first couple are a warm-up for the experienced solvers; #1 (2P vs. 1P) is by Ukrainian composer Mikhail Zinar, widely considered as the greatest expert in pawn endgames. #2 by Adamson sees 1P vs. 1P, and the difficulty is cranked up a notch in #3 by Weenink (2P vs. 2P). #4 by Grigoriev, who specialised in pawn and rook-and-pawn endgames, also sees a 1P vs. 1P situation but one that is much more difficult to crack than #2. The final two studies are challenging – Wotawa and Chekhover have set complex battles with multiple pawns on both sides in motion, where White must be resourceful and find the narrow path to a draw. Tackling these studies, one is reminded of Philidor's saying – "Pawns are the soul of chess." Enjoy!



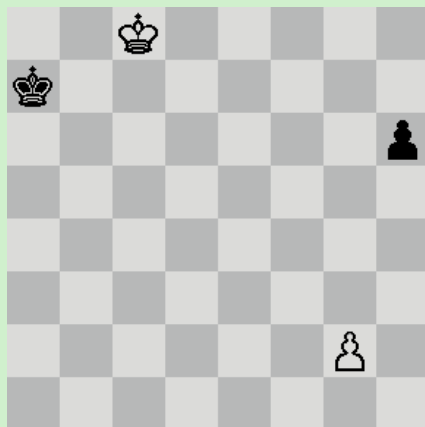
# Back to Basics – Pawn Endgames

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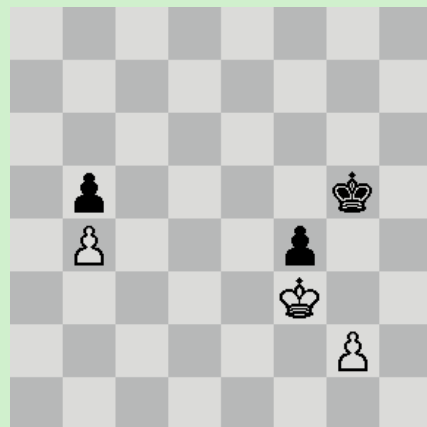
## 1. M.Zinar

Shakhmaty vs. SSSR, 1987



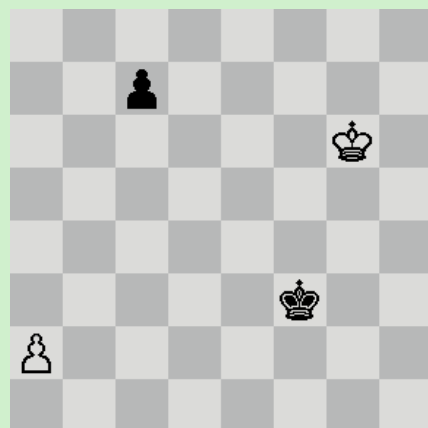
## 2. H. Adamson

Chess Amatuer 1915



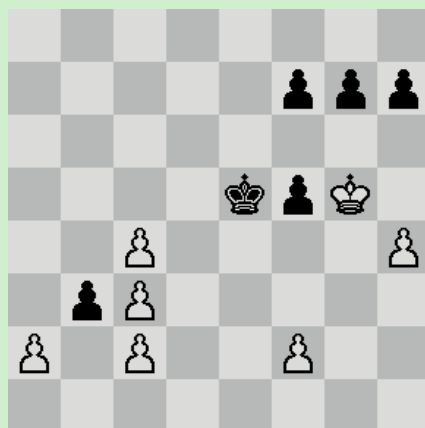
## 3. H. Weenink

Tijdschrift v.d. KNSB, 1924



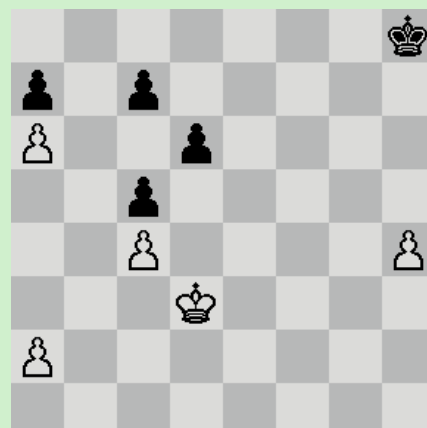
## 4. N. Gregoriev

Shakhmaty vs. SSSR, 1932



## 5. A. Wotawa

Deutsche Schachzeitung,  
1962



## 6. V. Chekhover

Sovjetskaja Rossija, 1956



INTERNATIONAL CHESS

# Karjakin Wins Chess Hunger Games in Baku

*“If every tournament was like the World Cup, I think I would be dead within 10 years.”* Hikaru Nakamura

Report by GM Ian Rogers, Photography by Cathy Rogers



**A**t first sight, the FIDE World Cup is a replica of Wimbledon, with 128 players competing for a major prize through seven knock-out rounds (though without the strawberries and cream for spectators).

The reality is much darker. The FIDE World Cup is much closer in spirit to a chess Hunger Games, where 128 individuals battle their way through a month of combat involving chessboard and, almost as importantly, chess clock. In tennis, a player can make 50 unforced errors and still win a match. In the chess Hunger Games, one mistake may end your tournament.

Within three World Cup rounds, almost 90% of players have made a mistake and been eliminated. This, after all, is a tournament with only one winner and 127 losers. One day you are eating with friends, the next day they (or you) are flying home and you eat alone. (Admittedly, first round losers take home \$4,800 to soften the blow, but all expenses – travel to Baku, hotel and food - must be borne by the players so some players from non-European countries finish only marginally ahead financially.)

The 2015 Chess Hunger Games took place in the Azeri capital Baku, in the iconic and luxurious Flame Towers, which sits on a hill high above the city and has become a symbol of the city's oil-fuelled development since independence from the USSR.

There were some notable absentees from the tournament, not just Magnus Carlsen and Viswanathan Anand who do not feel the need to

compete in an unforgiving World Championship qualifier with only one prize higher than their typical appearance fee.

However, although players from 45 countries were present in Baku, plenty of chess strongholds did not manage a single qualifier, including Scandinavia and Georgia, while Italy and the Philippines had seen their top players defect to the USA since the last World Cup and were now unrepresented in Baku.

The playing hall, the ballroom of the Flame Towers Hotel, offered perfect playing conditions, and indeed all the accompanying facilities surrounding the tournament were outstanding. A large picture of independent Azerbaijan's first President Heydar Aliyev in the centre of the playing room reminded the players that victory at any cost was what was demanded.

Each round of the World Cup involves matches with two classical games, and if the match is tied 1-1 then pairs of tiebreakers at faster and faster time limits are completed. Should the match score reach 4-4 then one Armageddon game is played; White has five minutes, Black four, but if the Armageddon game is drawn, White is eliminated from the tournament.

With most of the world's best players competing in Baku there was some quality chess played, but the knowledge that one poor decision could result in a ticket home meant that tension was high and blunders outnumbered brilliancies. Here are some of the highlights and lowlights of the fight for survival in Baku.

[Ed: See the PGN file for a selection of puzzles from the games of each round.]

## ROUND 1

With seed 1 playing seed 128, seed 2 against seed 127, etc, upsets on the top boards were highly unlikely and a bloodbath of seeds 65-128 ensued. Yet a few of the underdogs fought bravely and a handful triumphed.

The biggest name to fall in the first round was Boris Gelfand, the immaculately dressed former world title challenger outplayed in a rapid tie-breaker by a teenager from Chile in jeans and a t-shirt, physically shaking through nerves.

At least Gelfand, a former World Cup winner, could afford himself a rueful smile as he resigned his fourth and final game to Cristobal Henriquez Villagra.

There was no smiling for World Cup debutant Santosh Vidit after the following disaster against Lazaro Bruzon.

The 21-year-old Indian, after drawing 1-1 in the classical part of his match against the higher rated Cuban was pushing for advantage in the first tiebreaker, until he found the worst move on the board...



**38...Nf4??? 39.Ng4 mate!**

The next game, pressing for a win with an extra pawn, Vidit walked into another mate and was soon on an aeroplane to Qatar and then India.

One player was within touching distance of the second round (and a huge upset win) when a moment of inattention cost him everything.



Federico Perez Ponsa had already convincingly beaten Lenier Dominguez Perez in their first encounter and a draw seems like the minimum

Black should achieve from this 4 v 3 endgame. However, feeling no danger, the 22-year-old Argentinian carelessly played **34...Kf8 35.Rb4! Ke7??** and was shocked to discover that his bishop was trapped on an open board after **36.Ke1!**.

Perez pulled himself together enough to find **36...Bxg4 37.Rxg4 Kf6** when the position is objectively drawn but the gradient of the game had begun to swing in the Cuban GM's favour and Dominguez ground down his opponent in 101 moves. After such disappointment, the tiebreak was just a formality and Perez Ponsa was soon flying home.

Max Illingworth, the sole Oceania representative in the World Cup, was another who fought hard but lacked the consistency of the 14th seed, Indian number two Pentala Harikrishna.

Immediately after his loss, Illingworth admitted being slightly overawed: "Physically I'm fine but I was certainly nervous and spent too much time in the first game double and triple-checking my calculations. Nonetheless, I didn't feel like an outcast among these top players, though I probably read a bit too much into the top guys such as Nakamura watching my game [midway through game 1]."

Illingworth's annotations to his games



can be seen after his interview.

## ROUND 2

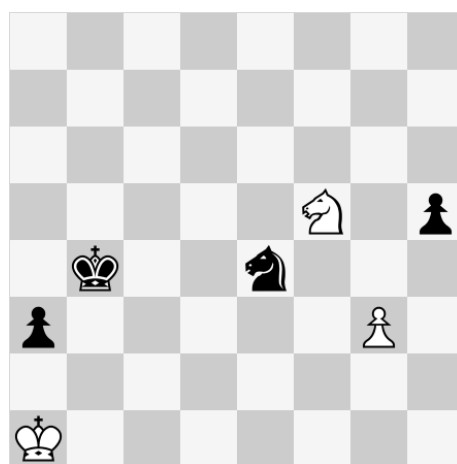
After the second round it was already clear that the winner of the chess Hunger Games would not be a new Katniss Everdeen, as the final female player was eliminated, Hou Yifan losing in rapid tiebreakers to home favourite Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. (The other two female players, Mariya Muzychuk and Deysi Cori had gone out in the first round to Michael Adams and Vladimir Kramnik respectively.

The biggest shock of the second round was the ejection of one of the tournament favourites, Levon Aronian at the hands of Alexander Areshchenko. Aronian had been the triumphant winner of the Sinquefeld Cup in Saint Louis little more than a week before the World Cup and needed to reach the World Cup final to qualify for the 2016 Candidates Tournament.

Areshchenko 29, was far from a soft pairing; at one time he was placed above Sergey Karjakin in Ukraine's Youth Olympiad team. However Areshchenko had dropped dramatically from his 2700+ peak, having been forced to relocate his family from the war-torn east of Ukraine to the safer city of Lviv.

Missing chances in both classical games, the first tiebreaker against Areshchenko turned out to be the end of Aronian's Candidates dreams. Misplaying a good attack, Aronian found himself a pawn down and was ground down by Areshchenko.

### Aronian - Areshchenko Game 3, after White's 62nd move



Black had been trying to bring his king safely to b3 without success for some time but finally Areshchenko found the correct path...

**62...Nc3! 63.Nd4 Kc4 64.Nf5 Ne2!  
65.Ka2 Kb4 66.Ne3**

The only hope since 66.Kb1 Kb3! 67.Ka1 a2 leads to mate after 68...Nd4, while 66.Ka1 merely delays the inevitable in view of 66...Kb3 67.Kb1 a2+ 68.Ka1 Ka3 69.Ne3 Nd4 70.Nc4+ Kb4! And now 71.Nd2 loses to 71...Nb3+ so Black cannot be prevented from playing 71...Kb3 and 72...Nc2 mate.

**66...Nxg3 67.Nd5+**

and now Black missed the stylish 67...Ka4! 68.Nc3+ Ka5! 69.Kxa3 h4 when the pawn queens. He played instead

**67...Kc4 68.Nf4 h4**

when Black's advantage was still enough to win in 101 moves.

Playing Black in the return game, Aronian never looked like winning and in fact lost again.

## ROUND 3

After round 3 the field was down to just 16 players and some more big names were not among them, including the only Russians among the top eight seeds, Vladimir Kramnik and Alexander Grischuk.

One third round match went to Armageddon, the dramatic encounter between Nakamura and the Russian who performed so well at the 2014 World Rapid and Blitz Championship in Dubai, Ian Nepomniachtchi.

The Nakamura-Nepomniachtchi match was a classic, both players fighting back to level the contests when one game down with one to play.

**Left:**

Aronian fights an uphill battle against Areshchenko

**Nepomniachtchi-Nakamura**

Game 6, after White's 40th move



Nepomniachtchi needs to win this game to stay in the match but had Nakamura played 40...N8b6! then most likely the American would go through to the fourth round within a few moves.

Instead Nakamura played

**40...e4?**

Missing that after

**41.Rd2!!**

Black has just opened the d-file to his own cost. The game continued

**41...Rxd1 42.Rxd1 Nxe3+ 43.Kb1!**

But now it turned out to be the open c-file which was fatal for Black and Nakamura was forced to resign after

**43...Qd6 44.Rdc1 Nd5 45.Rc6 Qh2 46.R6c2 Qf4 47.dxe4 Qxe4 48.Ka1 Nce7 49.Qb7 Re3 50.b6 Re1 51.bxc7 Rxc1+ 52.Rxc1 Nc8 53.Rd1 1-0**

Two blitz games followed, shared 1-1 with Nakamura bouncing back

after losing the first, which meant ... Armageddon!

Nakamura was Black in the deciding Armageddon game and won comfortably, but controversy broke out when commentator Sergei Shipov's observation that Nakamura had castled with two hands was conveyed to Nepomniachtchi.

Desperate to avoid elimination, Nepomniachtchi submitted an official protest, asking for Nakamura to be penalised for his illegal act. All moves must be made with one hand – and this turned out to be not the first time in the match that Nakamura had castled two-handedly.

Moreover, it was subsequently noted by the Appeals Committee – though only through a less than clear slow-motion replay - that Nakamura in the



Armageddon game had moved his rook first, also illegal under FIDE laws. The infringement was so marginal that it was hardly visible at normal speed, so to blame Nepomniachtchi or the arbiters for not seeing this, or Nakamura for 'cheating' would be ridiculous. It should be noted that USCF rules, upon which Nakamura would have been brought up, state "When castling, the player may touch either the king or the rook first."

Nepomniachtchi also claimed that Nakamura had also touched pieces and then moved other pieces, but this was a misapprehension – Nakamura has the annoying habit of adjusting a piece after he had moved, usually before pressing the clock, though occasionally afterwards (which is poor etiquette).

Nepomniachtchi's appeal was

dismissed because he had not complained at the time, yet the Russian reasonably pointed out that with four (!) arbiters watching the game, one of them should have noticed, stopped the clocks and applied a penalty.

## ROUND 4

The two oldest players in the last 16, Veselin Topalov and Peter Svidler, were paired together and soon the top seed found himself heading back home.

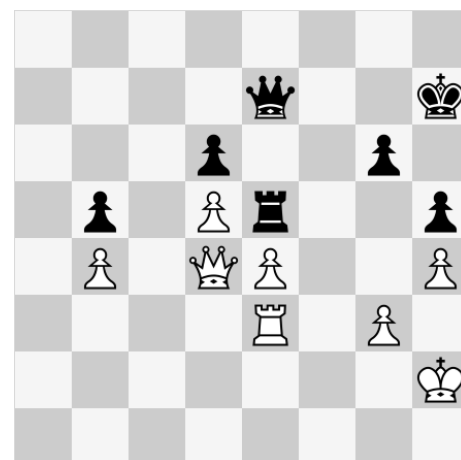
Topalov was only one of three top 10 players to fail to survive the fourth round. Caruana lost badly to the only home player left in the field, Mamedyarov, while Wesley So blundered material against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and narrowly failed to survive.

The match of the round was between the two remaining Chinese players, Ding Liren and Wei Yi, with 16-year-old Wei needing all his Houdini skills to progress to the next round.

Ding, the first Chinese player to reach the top 10 since Wang Yue in 2010, won the first classical game but his teenage opponent bounced back – but only just - to level the match.

### Ding Liren - Wei Yi

Game 2, after White's 48th move



#### Left:

"Castling" as stated in the rules of chess should be done with one hand not two, explains Nepomniachtchi against Nakamura



## WORLD CUP

If Black sits tight with, e.g. ...Qe8-e7, it is unlikely that White can make progress. Instead Ding looks for further liquidation, but this allows Yi to free his rook.

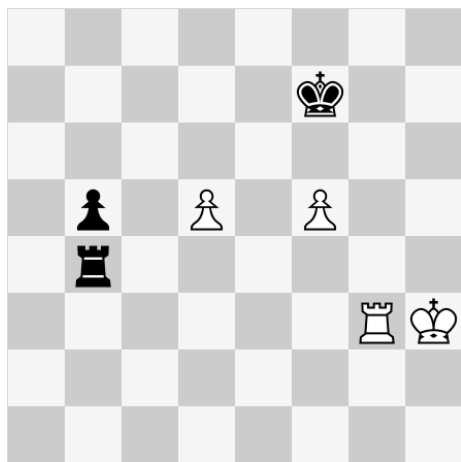
**48...g5?! 49.hxg5 Qxg5 50.Rf3! Re7 51.Rf4 Qg6 52.Rf6 Qg5 53.Qf2 Kg7 54.Rxd6 h4 55.Kh3?!**

55.gxh4 reaches a similar rook endgame after 55...Qe5+ 56.Qg3+, but one where White's pawns are more widely separated, offering superior winning chances.

**55...hxg3 56.Qf5**

In choosing between 56.Qxg3 and the text move, Wei seemed to forget about his clock and played this move with one second to spare!

**56...Qxf5+ 57.exf5 Re4 58.Rg6+ Kf7 59.Rxg3 Rxb4**



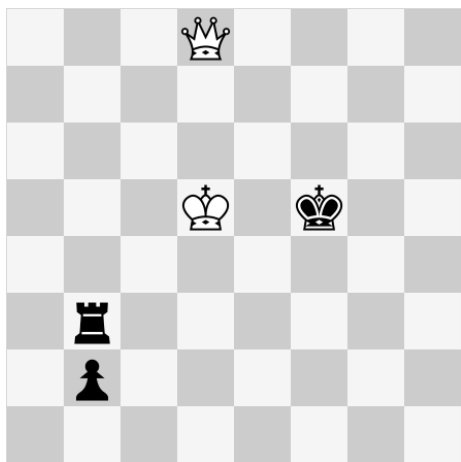
**60.Rd3! Rc4 61.d6 Rc8?**

After 61...Ke8! Black's king will block the d pawn and a draw is likely.

**62.Kg4 Kf6 63.Kf4 b4 64.Ke4 Rb8 65.Kd5?!**

65.Rb3 is the computer win, with the point that 65...Rb5 can be met by 66.d7! Ke7 67.Rd3 Kd8 68.f6 and White's pawns are just fast enough.

**65...b3 66.d7 b2 67.Rb3! Rxb3 68.d8Q+ Kxf5**



Suddenly the win is not so simple; in fact tablebases say that Black can now draw with best play. However at 30 seconds per move White is near certain to win eventually as it is almost impossible to ensure that the rook will have a safe square on the b-file.

**69.Qd7+ Kg5 70.Qe7+ Kg4 71.Qe4+ Kg3 72.Qg6+ Kh4?**

This turns out to be a fatal square. 72...Kf3!, reducing the checking

options for the queen, was necessary.

**73.Qb1! Kg5 74.Kc4! Rb8 75.Qg1+**

Now the rook is lost and, though it takes quite a few checks to prove this, Wei is up to the task.

**75...Kf5 76.Qc5+ Kg4 77.Qd4+ Kf3 78.Qf6+ Ke4 79.Qe6+ Kf3 80.Qf5+ 1-0**

The pair of 10 minute tiebreak games between Wei and Ding were decisive.

The first saw the prettiest move of the tournament – sadly not original and even more sadly not decisive.

### Wei Yi - Ding Liren Game 5

**1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.d3 c6 4.Nf3 d5 5.Bb3 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Bxd2+ 7.Qxd2 dxe4 8.Nxe5 0-0 9.dxe4 Qe7 10.Qf4! Nh5 11.Bxf7+ Kh8 (D)**



**12.Qg3!!**





Top: Playing hall for the tournament  
Below: Fabiano chatting with Ian after this game





The idea behind 10.Qf4 with the point that 12...Nxg3? loses to 13.Ng6+! hxg6 14.hxg3+. This idea has twice been played by Willy Hendrik, the Dutch IM author of the controversial book 'Move First, Think Later'.

Ding used only 9 seconds on his reply, so presumably the idea was known to him as well.

**12...Rxf7 13.Nxf7+ Qxf7 14.Qd6 Be6 15.Nc3 Nd7**

The upshot of White's opening trick is that he has a minimal material advantage but Black's active pieces ensure that Ding can maintain the balance.

**16.0-0-0 Re8 17.Rhf1 Bc4 18.Rfe1 Ne5 19.b3 Ba6 20.Kb1 h6 21.f3 Nf4 22.Rd2 Kh7 23.Red1 Re6 24.Qb8 Qf6 25.Na4 Be2 26.Rc1 b6 27.Nc3 Ba6 28.Rcd1 Nc4 29.bxc4 Qxc3 30.Qxf4 Qb4+ 31.Ka1 Qc3+ Draw**

The match concluded with a crazy 10 minute game where Wei stood on the brink of defeat for most of the game - as well as frequently being down to his final seconds - but the teenager refused to give Ding any easy wins. Eventually Ding over-pressed and managed to lose, perhaps the unluckiest victim of the Hunger Games lottery.

Refer to Round 4 Baku puzzles PGN

## QUARTER-FINALS

With players just two matches from a place in the 2016 Candidates tournament, caution began to dominate the classical games.

The pre-tournament favourite and second seed, Hikaru Nakamura, played an uninspired match against the World Cup's most in-form player Pavel Eljanov and was the first to fall in the Quarter Finals.

**Eljanov - Nakamura**  
Game 1, after White's 19th move



Black is solid, if passive, and after 19... Rd8 20.Rac1 Bxc5 21.dxc5 (21.Qxc5 meets the same reply) Na6 any White advantage would be minimal.

Nakamura preferred to hang on to his bishop pair but after

**19...Na6?! he was hit by 20.Nxb7! Qxb7 21.Bxc6 Qc7**

If Black avoids the swap of queens via 21...Qa7 he will lose his a5 pawn (though this may have been a better practical chance).

**22.Bxa8 Qxc3 23.bxc3 Rxa8 24.Nc6 Bd8 25.Nxd8 Rxd8 26.f3**

Materially Black is not doing badly at all; in many positions a bishop and knight can hold their own against a rook and two pawns.

However here Black's minor pieces are misplaced and Eljanov judged that White's position is close to winning.

**26...Rc8 27.Ra3 Bg6 28.Kf2 Rb8 29.Rd2 f6**

Accompanied by a draw offer, which certainly surprised Eljanov.

**30.Raa2 Rb3 31.Rab2! Rxc3 32.Rb5 Bc2 33.Rxa5 Nc7 34.Ra7 f5 35.a5**

and Nakamura had no defence against the advance of the a-pawn and resigned 23 moves later.

Nakamura never looked like winning the return encounter and the American was soon leaving Baku.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave was a semi-finalist at the previous World Cup in Tromso 2013 but here he meekly fell to the top seed remaining in the tournament, Anish Giri.





Top: Lu Shanglai put up tremendous resistance against Topalov  
Below: Wei Yi beats his Chinese counter part Ding Liren to advance



## Giri - Vachier-Lagrave

### Game 2

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.e3!?**

Giri is not interested in seeing Vachier-Lagrave's Grunfeld Defence.

**4...0-0 5.Be2 b6 6.0-0 Bb7 7.Nc3 d5 8.cxd5 Nxd5**

So far the players have followed the game Dubov-Vachier-Lagrave from the Qatar Open in 2014. There White played 9.Qb3 but achieved nothing after 9...e6 followed by ...Nd7 and ...c5.

**9.Bd2!? c5?!**

Too impetuous, but Giri was confident Vachier-Lagrave would play this way, explaining "Maxime is a very strong player with a great sense of dynamics, but he often likes giving away pawns without any real compensation. He pushes ...c5 in all Grunfeld positions, wherever he can. That's typical for him, though he usually manages to hold afterwards."

"While discussing with one of my seconds what I was going to play today, I pointed out a position I wouldn't wish to play. In that position he would have compensation for the pawn, but he likes giving away pawns even without compensation. Then we thought - let's look for the positions where he wouldn't have such

compensation! Well, as you can see we found such a position!"

**10.dxc5! Nxc3 11.Bxc3 Bxc3 12.bxc3 Nd7**

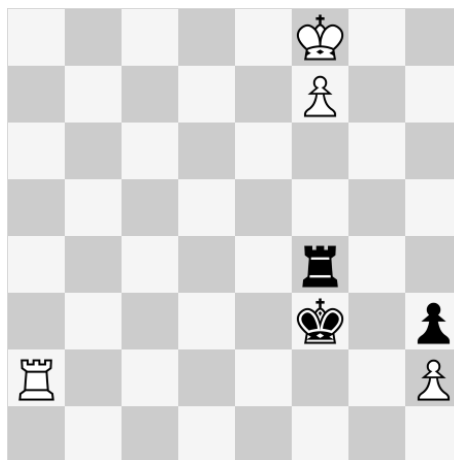
Giving up a pawn is necessary because after 12...bxc5 13.Qa4 Black has serious problems, with Rfd1, Rab1 and Qh4 in the air.

**13.cxb6 axb6 14.Qd4 Qc7**

In a typical Grunfeld, Black's pawn sacrifice would be good enough for rough equality but here, without a dark squared bishop on g7, Black has no real hope of winning one of White's isolated queenside pawns and must simply defend.

**15.Rfb1 Ra5 16.Qb4 e6 17.Qe7 Qd8 18.Qxd8 Rxd8**

40 moves later Vachier-Lagrave was still fighting hard but the extra pawn was by now on the seventh rank.



At first sight White's win is not so easy because 68.Ra6 Kg2 69.Ke7? allows 69...Rxf7+! 70.Kxf7 Kxh2 with a draw.

**68.Rb2!!**

Suddenly it turns out that Black is in zugzwang, unable to both keep his king close to the h2 pawn and keep his rook on the f-file (since 68...Rf5 loses to 69.Kg7).

**68...Ra4 69.Rb6 1-0**

Only the next day did the players realise that White's win was not as smooth as they had thought.

(Diagram of position after White's 50th move)



Here Vachier-Lagrave played the obvious

**50...Kd3** and after **51.Kf3 Kc2 52.Ra1 Rxb4 53.Ra5** the Black king could not get back in time, leading eventually to the previous diagram.



What Vachier-Lagrave only realised as he began the process of rebooking his air ticket back to Paris was that the remarkable

50...Ke3!! would have held the game.

The point is that after 51.Re1+ Kd3! (51...Kd4 loses to 52.Kf3! f5 53.Kg3!!, headed for g5) 52.Kf3 Rxb4 53.Rd1+ (otherwise the Black king will return in time) 53...Kc2 54.Rd5 Rb3+ 55.Kg2 h4 56.Rh5 Kd3! and once again the Black king saves the day.

A tiny difference, but one which might have seen Vachier-Lagrave into the semi-finals rather than Giri. As Svidler commented "People start to lose their minds."

Svidler himself finally ended the wonderful run of Wei Yi, though it took the Russian six games to finally kill off the challenge from the Chinese teenager.

After his tiebreak victories against Vovk and Ding, Wei had seemed like an indestructible Terminator in tiebreakers, capable of surviving impossible adversity on the board or the clock.

Although Svidler did a wonderful job of shutting down Wei's tactical strength - Wei barely surviving the opening in many games - somehow Svidler could never turn his advantages into a full point.

### Svidler-Wei Yi Game 3, after Black's 22nd move



Svidler had sacrificed the exchange and now calculates a clever forcing sequence which clarifies his advantage.

**23.Nxa7! Nxe3 24.Nxc8 Nxg2 25.Ne7+ Kf7 26.Nxg6! Kxg6 27.Rg1 Rxa2 28.Rxg2+ Kf7 29.Ne5+ Kf8 30.Ng6+ Kf7 31.Nf4! Rxb2+**

Even Wei's tactical vision was not quite enough to see 31...b5! with the point that 32.Nxe6 is met by 32...Nh5!!.

**32.Ke3 Bf8**

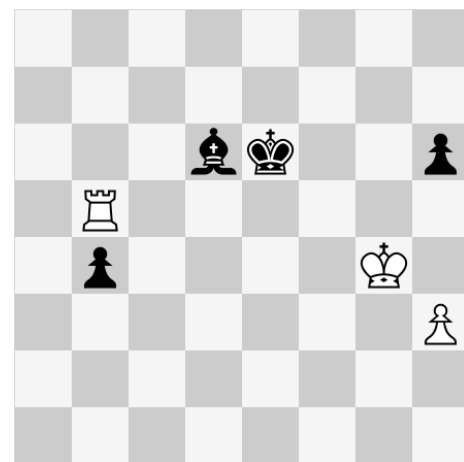
The best chance as now 32...b5 33.Nxe6 is good for White.

**33.Bc4 Rb6 34.Nxe6 Rxe6 35.e5 Nd7 36.f4 b5 37.Bxe6+ Kxe6 38.Rd2!**

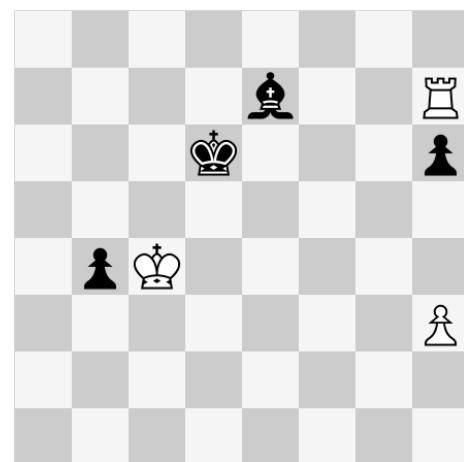
This looks grim for Black, with the connected passed pawns ready to

advance, but again Wei finds a way to stay in the game.

**38...b4! 39.f5+ Kxf5! 40.Rxd7 Kxe5 41.Kd3 Kf6 42.Rd5 Ke6 43.Rb5 Kf6 44.Ke4 Be7 45.Kf4 Bd6+ 46.Ke4 Be7 47.Kf4 Bd6+ 48.Kg4 Ke6**



**49.Kh5** Now Black draws immediately but it turns out that even the more sophisticated 49.Kf3 Be7 50.Kf4 Bd6+ 51.Ke4 Kd7 52.Kd5 Kc7 53.Kc4 Kc6 54.Rh5 Bf8 55.Rf5 Be7 56.Rf7 Kd6 57.Rh7 (**D**) which seems to win a pawn is not good enough because after



57...Bg5! 58.Kxb4 Ke5! 59.Rf7 Ke4

White can make no progress, e.g. 60.Kc5 Bf4 61.Kc6 Kf3 62.Kd5 Kg3 63.Ke4 Bd2 64.Rf3+ Kh4 and the draw is secure.

**49...Kd7! 50.Kxh6 Kc6 51.Rf5 b3 52.Rf1 Kc5 53.h4 b2 54.Rb1 Be5 55.Kg6 Kc4 56.Rxb2 Draw**

After five hard-fought draws, came the decisive sixth and final game of the match. Svidler explained, "As the match progressed, it became more evident that we were not in control of what was going on. People are tired and the quality dropped significantly. It's kind of ironic that the game I won, strategically the position was just awful. I got very lucky in the final one."

The final semi-finalist was Sergey Karjakin who, in front of a large crowd hoping for a home success, stopped Mamedyarov's run.

After a shaky first game and a short draw in the second, Karjakin was always in control of the tiebreakers, the first two being drawn but then the Russian winning both of the 10 minute games for a 4-2 victory.

## CHESS IN AZERBAIJAN

Taking time out from putting players on planes back to their home countries and finding hotel rooms for others staying longer than expected, the organising committee directors Murad Isgandarli and Joanna Golas sat down with Ian Rogers to explain the position of chess in Azerbaijan.

"The most popular sports in Azerbaijan are wrestling, football, chess, then boxing. We are in third place – it is not bad.

"If you talk with our locals, even take some people from the street, basically everybody plays chess or played chess. Often my close friends tell me "Yes, I played chess when I was young but then I had to choose if I want to go to the university or play chess." In our IT department for the tournament we have former chessplayers; one who was the last USSR Youth Champion for his age group.

"You can walk around the city, especially on the boulevard, and can find people sitting on the sides of the fountains playing chess – chess or backgammon.

Women don't play sports so much in Azerbaijan; fitness, gym, aerobics – the types of sports to keep you fit. Gymnastics is also quite popular

– Azerbaijan is quite good at women's gymnastics. One problem for women's chess in Azerbaijan is that women who play reach a certain age and then they start a family. Women in Azerbaijan are not very sporty but it will come. Society is changing."

"Most of the people in Azerbaijan like chess and they respect it. People from the hotel, especially the management, respected chess; that's why they were ready to help us to organise the World Cup. The Flame Towers is an iconic building so we wanted to hold it here and for the hotel also hosting the World Cup is a great honour, not some minor event or congress.

"In 2009 the President of Azerbaijan signed a decree, starting a chess development programme for the whole country. It is a special programme for developing chess in the regions – we have a network of chess schools, more than 70 based in the city centres of the regions and under the protection of the Minister for Education. We have a lot of people in the regions who have played and are qualified to teach chess.

"We will start working on the Olympiad as soon as we finish with the World Cup. We have the venue already, the Crystal Hall which is a great place. If you realise that we have only 128 players at the World Cup yet there are so many difficulties,



so many organisational issues. It's scaring us but we will manage [the Olympiad in 2016]. We need more people, more professionals to help us, more chess lovers, more volunteers. Most of the volunteers here were also volunteers for the recent European Games. We have a lot of ideas and are planning some crazy events for the Olympiad."

## THE ARMENIANS

That players from Armenia competed in Baku at all was a tribute to the sincere efforts of the World Cup organisers as well as the willingness of the Armenian players to reciprocate.

Citizens from Armenia or of Armenian origin are normally not granted visas for Azerbaijan but the Azeris when agreeing to host the World Cup (and the Olympiad in 2016) agreed to make it possible for Armenians to compete. The organisers declared that the visiting Armenians would be completely secure, though Aronian took no chances, bringing his own bodyguard.

Speaking before the tournament Aronian had said, "Surely it's not very easy for we chess players to do our best, because our countries are in conflict. However I get along well with Azeri players and Armenian artists and musicians also go to Azerbaijan. I will perform as a person who wants

to bring peace to the region, showing that I respect the neighbouring country."

Shortly before the World Cup began, relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia became more tense, with the Azerbaijan government declaring that negotiations over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh have failed and they may need to turn to military force.

Add to that travelling to a city which saw pogroms against Armenians little more than a quarter of a century ago and there was reason for the Armenian players to be nervous.

The organisers had expended plenty of effort assuring the Armenian Chess Federation that their Grandmasters would be safe in Baku and were true to their word, with security screening for all World Cup audience members and positioning of the Armenian tables as far from any spectators as possible. More than that, the World Cup organisers attempted, as much as was possible, to make the Armenians feel welcome.

Before the event, the Armenian players had expected to confine themselves to the Flame Towers Hotel for the duration of the tournament. The players stuck together, creating a mini cheer squad to support Gabriel Sargissian when his first round match against Mateusz Bartel went to an

Armageddon finish. Sargissian won, and the celebrations among his supporters were apparent.

Within a few days some of the Armenian players had enough confidence to take walks in the park nearby the hotel. The park was not a complete escape from the worries of the world – it contained hundreds of plaques commemorating the (mostly) young Azeri soldiers who died in 1992 fighting against Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Baku World Cup turned out to be a disaster (chess-wise) for the Armenian contingent – including the US players of Armenian origin, who also required a special visa to be allowed to participate. All the Armenians were knocked out by the second round, perhaps showing that, despite the best efforts of the Azeri organisers, it was possible to feel safe in Baku and yet not comfortable enough to perform at maximum strength.

Nonetheless, on his final day in Baku, Aronian went for a tour along the waterfront and into the old town of Baku. When your World Championship chances have been lost for two years, why not live dangerously and have some fun?





Top: The Armenian team before their starting games.  
Below: The teams arrive for the opening ceremony





## ANTI-CHEATING

At the Baku World Cup, the FIDE Anti-Cheating Commission introduced what were correctly described as unprecedented anti-cheating measures.

While ACP President and tournament commentator Emil Sutovsky described the measures as sensible and not draconian, some players, and many spectators wondered if they had been properly thought through.

At the World Cup, watches, as well as mobile phones, were treated as electronic devices and banned from the playing hall. Pens could be inspected and the organisers requested that players use the official pens provided. (As usual at World Cups nowadays, players and spectators were scanned electronically before entering the playing hall.)

Any player who left the playing hall, to use the toilet or to smoke, could be subject to scanning on their return and 5 players each round were randomly chosen for scans at the end of their games.

Most controversially, several games each round had their transmission delayed by 15 minutes. While an anti-cheating measure also used at Dortmund, here it was rendered ineffective by the fact that the video

feed televising those games was not delayed.

So spectators could watch moves via the live television feed and even see a game finishing, while the commentators were explaining moves from 15 minutes earlier. It was amateurish at best, enormously frustrating for spectators at worst.

Just to confuse the picture further, players who suspected their opponent of cheating could no longer quietly ask the arbiter to keep an eye on their opponent. Any accusation had now to be made in writing – an enormous distraction during a game – and to further discourage any allegations, two false accusations would mean a ban for the accuser.

These new measures are a direct response to the Sandu case from the 2015 European Women's Championship in Georgia, where Natalia Zhukova, without any evidence, made cheating allegations against the tournament leader Mihaela Sandu. Despite the continuing absence of any evidence apart from Sandu's 5/5 start to the tournament, Zhukova – and surprisingly many others – still maintain that Sandu must have cheated somehow, and that paranoia has manifested itself in the new anti-cheating measures.

Whether they are necessary or effective is another question; no doubt when another lower rated player like Sandu starts scoring well, they will be deemed insufficient and new measures introduced.

As Nakamura tweeted: "It's a sad day for chess when cheating has reached the point of no watches and pens being allowed."

Giri was more practical. "If they remove one way of cheating, they will allow another one. I am not worried and don't suspect anyone. At a tournament like Dortmund it is very easy to listen to the commentators backstage or bring your own device. But I don't think any one of the top players does that – we don't live on anti-cheating regulations, we live on trust."

## SEMI-FINALS

For three of the four players, these were the real finals, since the winners would qualify for the 2016 Candidates tournament. Only Anish Giri had pre-qualified (thanks to his high average rating throughout 2015).

The Svidler-Giri semi-final was matching two players undefeated so far in the tournament – in fact Giri was on a non-losing streak of over 40 games – but one bad day meant elimination for the Dutchman.

### Giri - Svidler Game 2

A surprise for Svidler. "Giri has usually played the closed openings against me, so after 1.e4 I was sitting there wishing I had at least made a plan for 1.e4," admitted Svidler.

**1...e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 Bb7 10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2**



**11...exd4!? 12.cxd4 Nd7**

Svidler seems to have adopted this unusual version of the Zaitsev system after it was used against him in Gibraltar in January by the young Icelandic player Gudmundur Kjartansson and he subsequently used it without troubles against Yu Yangyi and Motylev. "I have spent a lot of time on this line and I am not convinced that it equalises but [under the circumstances] it seemed better than the alternatives," said Svidler.

**13.Nf1 Na5 14.Bc2 Bf6 15.Rb1**

"The most dangerous move for Black," said Svidler. "In fact the whole system is strategically very dangerous for Black."

**15...c5 16.d5 Nc4 17.b3 Nce5 18.N3h2 Ng6 19.Ng3 Bc8**



**20.Rf1**

"Played more or less instantly. If

immediately 20.Ng4 I have the typical idea 20...Bc3! gaining a tempo and after 21.Bd2 Bxd2 22.Qxd2 Nf6 23.Nxf6+ Qxf6 24.b4, maybe I am slightly worse but it is playable," said Svidler.

Meanwhile on Twitter, Radjabov was commenting, "It's funny that so far Giri is following my own preparation for my first game against Svidler [in round 3]!"

**20...Nb6**

"By now I realised that I would have to give up one of my bishops," said Svidler, "but I felt that if I have to give up my dark-squared bishop I will be more or less lost because his bishop will come to b2 and I will get mated."

**21.Ng4 Bxg4**

"By now I had only 45 minutes left," said Svidler. "I have spent [a lot of time] analysing this line but it would have been nice to remember what I had written in my notes!"

In contrast, Giri had his first serious pause for thought only on 21.Ng4, and even then for only eight minutes.

**22.hxg4 h6 23.Nf5**

"This looks tremendous for White as Black's counterplay is a long way away," admitted Svidler.



**23...Ne7! 24.Ne3!?**

"He decided to keep the knights on the board, but 24.g3 Nxf5 25.gxf5 was also possible," said Svidler.

**24...b4! 25.g3 a5 26.Kg2!?**

"He has a tremendous amount of choice," said Svidler, "so he began to use a lot of time. If he had played 26.a4!? I was not sure how I was supposed to react. Anish feared 26...bxa3 but after 27.Bxa3 I think this would be much easier for White to control than the position he reached in the game."

**26...a4**

"Here he had another long think," said Svidler. "If he allows my rook to reach a2 it will be difficult for him to give mate, which will probably require playing f4."

**27.bxa4!? Qd7 28.Qd3?!**

"After this it will be hard to go back. Anish said he was thinking about 28.g5!? Bxg5 29.f4 Bf6 30.e5 but he couldn't make it work," explained Svidler. "My big advantage was that for the remainder of the game, almost every move I make will be an only move, whereas White has 5 options at every turn!"

"If he wants to limit the damage he can play 28.a3! e.g. 28...Nxa4 29.Bxa4 Rxa4 30.axb4 Rxb4 31.Rxb4 cxb4

32.Bd2 when the b-pawn can be a weakness. This was a way to make sure that White is never worse."

**28...Ng6****29.Nf5?**

"If 29.a3! I have the tremendous move 29...c4! 30.Nxc4 Nxc4 31.Qxc4 Qxg4 but then 32.Bd1! is enough to force a draw after 32...Nh4+ 33.Kh2 Nf3+ 34.Kg2," said Svidler.

**29...Nxa4 30.Bxa4**

"He offered a draw here," said Svidler, "but this is obviously the best position I have had in this game so far and if I don't see [a mate for him] I should continue!"

**30...Rxa4 31.Rh1 Ne7!**

"The last important moment of the game," said Svidler. "Once the knights come off it will be much easier for me to defend the kingside. If I play 31...

Rxa2 then after 32.g5 hxg5 33.Qf3-h5-h7-h8! is a real threat."

**32.g5**

Played after only a minute and a half; "I guess he missed something," said Svidler. "If 32.Bxh6!? Nxf5 33.gxf5 Ra3! 34.Rb3 Rxb3 35.axb3 gxh6 36.Rxh6 Qe7! and the attack stops, although the win may take some time."

**32...hxg5****33.Ne3**

"Perhaps he thought he could give mate with 33.Nxe7+ Qxe7 34.e5 but after 34...Qxe5! I just collect all the [pawns]," said Svidler.

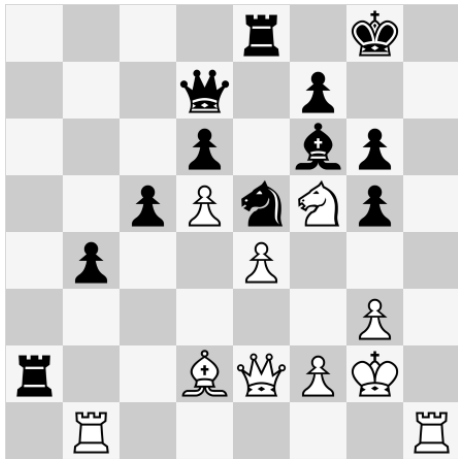
**33...Rxa2 34.Bd2 Ng6 35.Nf5 Ne5!**

"My original plan was to play 35...c4! 36.Qf3 Rxd2 37.Qh5 Nh4+! 38.gxh4 Rxe4 (I looked at 38...g6! 39.Nh6+ Kg7 40.Qf3 but now I see that 40...Rd3! wins on the spot.) 39.hxg5 Rxf2+

but then I saw 40.Kg1!!," explained Svidler. "Though probably here even 40...Rg4+! wins."

Svidler's calculations were not quite correct - in this line 41.Ng3!! miraculously holds the game and forces Black to take a perpetual check after 41...Rxb3+ 42.Kxf2 Qf5+ 43.Kxb3 Be5+ 44.Kg2 Qc2+.

### 36.Qe2 g6



### 37.Nh6+

"I was in a state of blind panic when I saw that he could play 37.Bxg5!??," admitted Svidler, "because if 37...Bxg5 38.Qxa2 gxf5 39.f4 and the fight continues. However then I spotted 37...Rxe2! 38.Bxf6 Rxf2+! 39.Kg1 Rh2!! After I found ...Rh2 I took a deep breath!."

### 37...Kg7 38.Nf5+

"There is nothing else he can do," said Svidler. "If 38.Rh2 he has no threats; I can even play 38...g4 followed by

...Nf3 and all of my pieces come in."

### 38...Kg8 39.Nh6+ Kg7 40.Nf5+ gxf5 41.Qh5 Ng6 0-1

"I have reached the time control and he has just one check," said Svidler.

The rematch the next day was a non-event; Svidler succeeded in taking queens off the board by move ten and did nothing until Giri offered a draw on move 51. Giri's final tweet summed up most players' World Cup experience; "Was getting lucky, until I no longer was..."

The second semi-final was a heart-breaker for the player of the World Cup, Pavel Eljanov.

Using the same tactics employed by Rustam Kasimdzhanov to stop the Topalov freight train in Libya 2004 – a KO event where Topalov had started with 9.5/10 – Karjakin hung on to draw with Black and took a quick draw with White in the classical games, to force a rapid tiebreaker.

Eljanov still held the upper hand after winning the first rapid game but Karjakin bounced back immediately, as he had done against Onischuk earlier in the World Cup.

A one move blunder cost Eljanov the first 10 minute game with White, but he then comprehensively outplayed Karjakin in the return match-up, only

for tragedy to strike in an extraordinary manner.

### Karjakin - Eljanov

Game 6, after White's 64th move



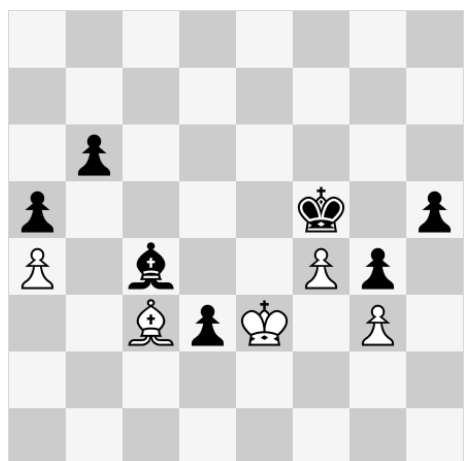
Black first task is to create a passed pawn on the queenside and he did so with

### 64...a5! 65.Be1 Ke6?!

Not spoiling anything but Black had a straightforward win with the direct 65...Bb3! 66.Kxd3 Bxa4 67.Bf2 and now 67...Bb5+! when White can only choose between 68.Kc3 Ke4! followed by ...Kf3xg3 and 68.Ke3 a4 69.Be1 a3 70.Bc3 a2 when Black will win slowly but surely by pushing his b-pawn, bringing his king over to the queenside and then distracting White's pieces with a well-timed ...h4.

### 66.Bc3 Kf5 67.Be1 Kf6 68.Bd2 Kg6 69.Bc3 Kf5??





Having gained some 10 second increments, Eljanov is now ready to play 70...Bb3 and win as in the previous note.

Unfortunately at this moment Karjakin called over the arbiter and indicated that he would play 70.Be1 after which the position will have appeared three times with the same person to move.

After the players and the arbiter replayed the game on an adjacent board, a devastated Eljanov had to accept the draw, ending his Candidates hopes. Nonetheless, the Ukrainian still found the strength to tweet, "It's untrue to call Sergey Karjakin's victory undeserved. Chess is the most fair sport."

Most were more inclined to agree with Nakamura's opinion, contradicting Carlsen, that, "It would be insane to consider this [sort of KO tournament] as a World Championship."

## FINAL

*'Those whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.'*

The four game final proved to be the epitome of a Hunger Games finale, with exhaustion and blunders prevalent. Peter Svidler seemed to have the final in his keeping by outplaying Karjakin in the first game and then exploiting a terrible blunder by Karjakin in the second.

"Seems like I used the limit of all the luck I had!" was Karjakin's summary after falling behind 0-2. FIDE officials, including the FIDE President Kirsan Iljumzhinov began arriving in Baku, looking to witness the last rites.

However Karjakin and the match wasn't finished yet – Svidler, just moves away from a 3-0 victory, blundered in the third game and was then ground down in a depressing endgame in the fourth and final classical game.

Having survived his fourth must-win game for the tournament, Karjakin won the first tiebreaker and was then in a position to need only to draw to take the title.

He failed, Svidler winning the next two games to have another game

with the White pieces where he needed only a draw. Once again the player leading the match failed to hold. Svidler's distress and tiredness was becoming more and more evident while Karjakin, at least externally, appeared to be calmer and more able to concentrate.

The first blitz game was a new disaster for Svidler. Having found a creative attack in a Marshall Gambit, the older man was up an exchange and with 41 seconds to 4 when he blundered a rook for nothing and resigned immediately.

The next game saw a dispirited Svidler create some chances but Karjakin held firm and won when Svidler pushed too hard. The final score of 6-4 was very harsh on Svidler but the winner of the 2015 World Cup turned out to be the come-back kid Sergey Karjakin.

### Svidler- Karjakin

#### Game 1

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 e6 4.0-0 Be7 5.d3 0-0 6.Nbd2 c5 7.e4 Nc6 8.Re1 b5 9.exd5 Nxd5!?**





A fairytale event for Eljanov but tragically cut short in dramatic style





"A perfectly healthy option. Sergey has played a number of games after 9...exd5 which is a different kettle of fish," said Svidler.

#### 10.Ne4

"White is supposed to play 10.a4 b4 11.Nc4," said Svidler, "but both sides are very solid and I honestly don't know what White is supposed to be doing here. In playing 10.Ne4 I was hoping for something sharper."

#### 10...Bb7 11.c3 a6

"I thought that the easiest way for for Black to play 11...h6!, to cut out Bg5" said Svidler. "I wasn't sure what I would do because if 12.d4 cxd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Qxd4 Qc7 I think Black has a small but tangible advantage."

#### 12.a4 b4

"12...h6 was still playable, "whereas now I started to become interested."

#### 13.Bg5 f6

Passed over without comment by Svidler, but after 13...h6! 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 it is unlikely that White can make anything of the weakened c5 square, so the position remains equal. Later Black will begin to regret the weakening involved in playing ...f6.

#### 14.Bd2 e5 15.Rc1



#### 15...Rf7?!

A subtle move, protecting the bishop on b7 in some lines, but the rook proves to be awkwardly placed when the position blows open. "15...Rc8, taking the c5 square under control, was worrying me a great deal," said Svidler. "I am not sure what to do next. If I play 16.d4 then after 16... cxd4 17.cxd4 Nxd4 18.Nxd4 exd4 I never have Nc5."

#### 16.d4!

"There are other options but it's clear that if I can play 16.d4 then I should

play 16.d4!" said Svidler. 16...bxc3?! "Based on a miscalculation," said Svidler.

16...cxd4 17.cxd4 exd4, keeping the b file closed, was far stronger.

#### 17.bxc3 cxd4 18.cxd4 Nxd4

Played extremely quickly by Karjakin, who thought for 11 minutes on 15...Rf7, 4 on 16...bxc3 and then used only seconds for his next three moves, believing that he had found a forced draw.

However on 18...exd4 19.Qb3! is again very strong, e.g. 19...Rb8 20.Nfg5!! fxf5 21.Nc5! and Black is losing material.

#### 19.Nxd4 exd4



#### 20.Qb3!

"He thought I had to play 20.Nc5," said Svidler, "and then 20...Bxc5 21.Rxc5 Nc3! and we can go home, - all the pieces will come off and it will

be a four rook endgame with equal material."

**20...Rb8?!**

"Sergey thought he was better now," said Svidler. The alternative 20...Qd7 may have been better but after 21.Ba5! Black is under huge pressure.

**21.Rb1!**

"Suddenly he is almost in zugzwang," said Svidler. "He can't connect the rooks because 21...Rf8 runs into 22.Bf4!."

**21...Qd7 22.Rec1!**

"I can win the exchange with 22.Ng5!?" said Svidler, "but after 22...fxg5 23.Bxd5 Bxd5 24.Qxb8+ Rf8, I might even be worse."

**22...Qe6?**

"I couldn't find a forced win after 22...h6," admitted Svidler, "even though after 23.Nc5 Bxc5 24.Rxc5 Nc3 25.Bxc3 dxc3 26.Rxc3 he is completely tied up. At some point he might be able to play ...Bxg2, though of course I should be winning somehow."

For Karjakin, the thought of a permanent pin on the b file was too horrible to contemplate so after 10 minutes he prefers to allow a quick death.

**23.Nc5 Bxc5 24.Rxc5 Rd8 25.Ba5!**

**Rd6**



"If 25...Rdd7, 26.Qc4 wins also, though I was thinking about 26.Re1 Qd6 27.Qxb7!? (27.Bb4! is the clearest win I.R.) 27...Rxb7 28.Re8+ Rf8 29.Bxd5+ Rbf7 30.Rxf8+ Kxf8 31.Bb4! and maybe White is winning anyway," said Svidler.

Svidler's final conclusion was true, but he was fortunate he did not have to choose which line to play as he had missed 29...Kh8! after which Black turns the tables.

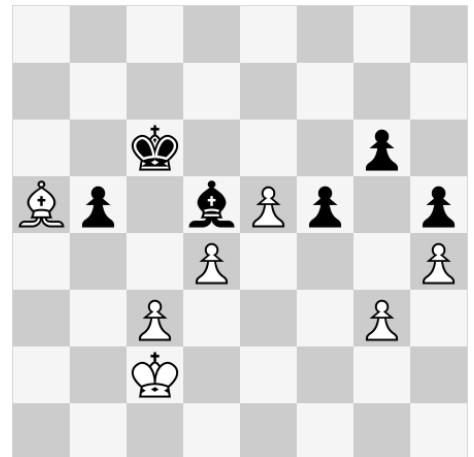
**26.Qc4!**

Karjakin admitted to overlooking this when he played 22...Qe6.

**26...Nc3 27.Rxb7 Qe1+ 28.Bf1 Ne2+ 29.Qxe2 1-0**

There is no hope after 29.Qxe2 Qxe2 30.Rc8+! Rf8 31.Rxf8+ Kxf8 32.Bxe2.

**Karjakin-Svidler**  
Game 5, after Black's 66th move



Black, who had held the upper hand for much of the game before allowing Karjakin to win a pawn, seems to have set up an unbreakable blockade. However Karjakin finds one last way for White to play for a win...

**67.Kb2 Be6 68.Ka3 Bd5**

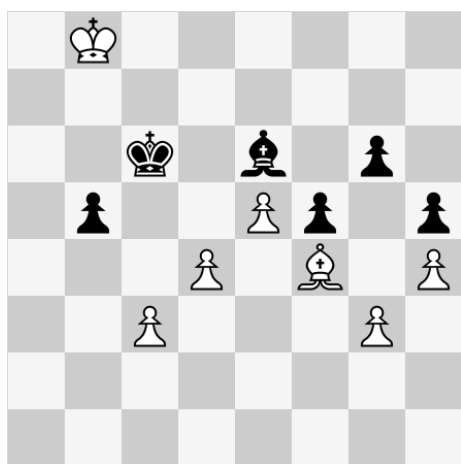
Here or next move Svidler could force a draw with 68...g5! when White must back-pedal with 69.Bd8 f4 70.Bxg5 fxg3 71.Be3 g2 when the passed g pawn prevents any winning attempts by White.

**69.Kb4 Be6 70.Bd8! Bd5 71.Ka5 Be6 72.Ka6 Bc8+ 73.Ka7 Be6 74.Bg5 Bd7 75.Bf4 Be6 76.Kb8 Bd7 77.Bg5 Be6 78.Bh6 Bd7 79.Bf4 Be6**



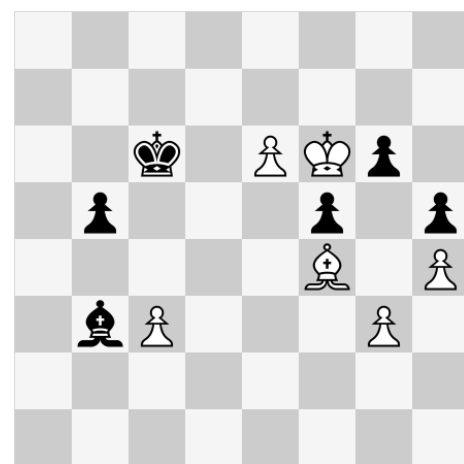


## Sergey Karjakin secures a spot in the next Candidates tournament



Svidler spent most of his remaining time on this decision but there may be no way to save the game. After 80... Kxd5!? 81.Kc7 Bf7 82.Kd7 Be6+ 83.Ke7 Bc8 84.Kf7 Bd7! 85.Kxg6 Be8+! then 86.Kf6!! (and not 86.Kxf5 Bd7+ 87.Kf6 Bg4 which probably holds) leads to zugzwang after 86...Bd7 87.Kf7!.

**81.Kc8 Bb3 82.Kd8 Bc4 83.Ke7 Bb3  
84.e6 Bc4 85.Kf6 Bb3**



Black wants to answer 86.e7 with 86... Kd7 87.Bd6 Ke8 88.Kxg6 Bd1, though perhaps even this does not hold if White manoeuvres his king to c5 and follows with g4.

Has Karjakin run out of ideas? Not yet!

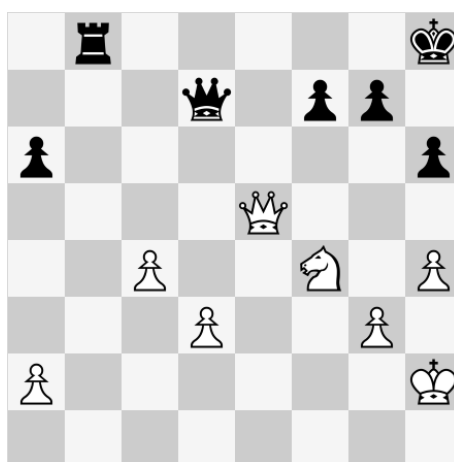
**80.d5+!! Bxd5**

In any case Karjakin finds a far superior win.

**86.Bc1! Bc4 87.Ba3 Bb3 88.e7 Kd7  
89.Kxg6 1-0**

Now the h pawn is lost because 89.Kxg6 Bd1 is impossible because of 90.Kf7.

## Karjakin-Svidler Game 9, after White's 42nd move



The first of the blitz games. Svidler has played well and has 40 seconds to his opponent's 4 (plus 3 second increments). Any normal move - 42...Qe8 or 42...Re8 - would win without difficulty but Svidler played **42...Kg8??**  
**43.Qxb8+ 1-0**

# D

id Sergey Karjakin deserve to win the 2015 edition of chess' Hunger Games? Of course; he survived and none of the other 127 contenders did. Even Svidler admitted, "If I don't use so many opportunities to finish the match, I don't deserve to win."

There were plenty of 'What if?'s for Karjakin, starting with his second round match against Onischuk - but in the end the 25-year-old, the youngest Grandmaster in history, not only qualified for his first Candidates tournament but become the only player to survive 5 must-win games in a World Cup. Many players - even Karjakin - will probably be happy that the next FIDE knock-out tournament is two full years away; otherwise Nakamura's prediction of players dying of stress might come true.





Peter Svidler when you're winning





Above: When you're not  
Below: The chess taxi







Above: The closing ceremony awards  
Below: Final press conference for the two players  
*Photos by Maria Emelianova*





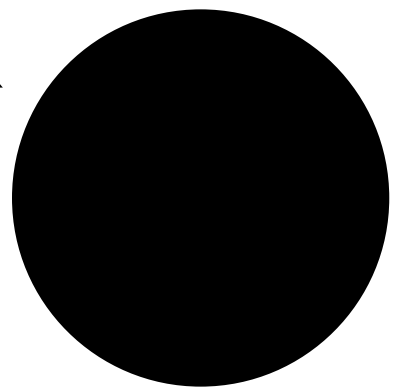
OCTOBER 2015

INTERVIEW



# MAX ILLINGWORTH: LIFE OF A CHESS PLAYER

2015 has been another great year for young Sydney chessplayer Max Illingworth, who has closed in on the Grandmaster title and won the Oceania Zonal at his home club Norths in July to qualify for the World Cup in Baku. We spoke to him after his match against Indian Grandmaster Pentala Harikrishna.



INTERVIEW BY FEDJA ZULFIC AND MOULTHUN LY

PHOTOS BY CATHY ROGERS



# Road to the World Cup

**T**ell us a bit about yourself, some interesting things people might not know - your early life, how you started playing chess, some of your other hobbies etc.

As some of you already know, I am a chess professional, which means I make my living from chess coaching, playing and writing about chess. When I was very young I played a lot of games and had a knack for them (usually beating my parents quite quickly). My introduction to chess came as a six year old travelling around Europe, where I saw two old men playing on a giant chess set in Salzburg, Austria, and I was immediately transfixed to the game. When I returned to Australia, my mum taught me how to play, I joined a local junior chess club and things went from there.

I should point out that I didn't treat chess competitively at all for the first couple of years I played, then when I was eight years old I played in a tournament and saw Raymond Song picket-fence the tournament I was playing in, which motivated me to start working towards becoming a stronger player. I don't have that many hobbies as my chess

life and work keeps me pretty busy, however I like to run and jog, listen to music, read and watch good films. I view myself as a passionate person able to find pleasure in many things, and it happens that chess is the most pleasurable activity for me.

**Who have been the major influences in your chess career, and what role have they played?**

I feel the most substantial influences have come from my former coaches I worked with for a long period of time – namely John-Paul Wallace (before he moved to Europe), Brett Tindall and Ian Rogers. I think my current style is to a large extent the result of John-Paul's emphasis on having a good understanding of the position (which I also emphasise in my work with my students), Brett helped a lot in giving my play the dynamism it needed to develop past a club level, and Ian was instrumental in bringing pragmatism and trickiness into my play, as well as contributing heavily to my chess understanding and knowledge. My work with Laszlo Hazai was also quite important in evolving my overall approach to the opening phase.

In terms of favourite players, I really liked the games of Peter Leko as a young junior, but once I gained a little experience I realized I could learn a lot from the games of any strong player and since then I tend to most closely follow those players who are playing the best at any given time. And as far as authors go, the first chess books I studied seriously were an old series by Seirawan, which provided a solid framework for my overall chess understanding as I was starting out.

**You're well known for playing a wide variety of opening variations (just about every one in the book!) and now regularly write about opening theory for this magazine and a number of other top publications. Is there something that you find particularly interesting about the first phase of the game that has led to you becoming a specialist?**

**‘ My first ever published contribution was in the New in Chess Yearbook in 2005 ’**

Indeed, I'm familiar with virtually every major opening variation and have experience in many of them – although with the machine and databases as they are, it's become a lot easier to get the necessary

knowledge and feel for a certain variation.

On the subject of my writing, my first ever published contribution was in the New In Chess Yearbook in 2005, when I noticed an important omission in a survey on the Sveshnikov Sicilian (my main defence to 1.e4 at the time) and sent a letter correcting it. At the time I probably set a record for the youngest person to contribute to the Yearbook! Then in mid-2009 the Australasian Chess Magazine was looking for a replacement 'Games Columnist' to analyse recent high-level games, and I fulfilled this role until the magazine's cessation at the end of 2013.



**Left:**

Two Australians in Baku - and a third behind the camera! Ian talks to Max after his game.



In the meantime I started writing surveys on a regular basis for the New In Chess Yearbook, then from late 2013 I started contributing opening articles to ChessBase Magazine, and I've been writing the 1.d4 d5 section of ChessPublishing (a major opening theory website) for a year now, as well as analyzing high-level games for ChessBase Magazine and writing some blog posts when I have spare time (which is not as often as I would like!).

As for my interest in the opening phase, it's quite logical to put a lot of work into this area of the game as it is quite easy to apply such work (and to be clear, by opening work I include study of typical middlegame and endgame positions) in your games – you will get the Najdorf Sicilian more often than rook and f+h pawn vs. rook if your repertoire is so inclined.

I think my original fascination with the opening phase stemmed from a general curiosity, of wondering what happens after various continuations and wanting to try different ideas, then I figured that I may as well learn some theory rather than reinvent the wheel all the time. I remember as a young kid I would sometimes analyse by playing out some game and then looking for improvements for both sides from there. I think the New In Chess magazine and Yearbook were also major inspirations for me in this respect.

**Do you feel that playing such a wide variety of openings has helped develop your chess? If yes, how? Were there times you feel you may have struggled with such a wide repertoire as a junior?**

Absolutely, to become a very strong player you have to understand every major type of position and once I realized this in late 2008 (I'm not sure how it clicked but I

probably read it somewhere) I figured that the best way to do so would be to study different variations and assimilate the knowledge into understanding through practical play.

I can think of some players who were definitely held back by having too narrow a repertoire – they still play the same openings they did when they started playing serious tournaments and it means they lack the flexibility in thinking and recognition of ideas from different openings to apply to their openings to reach their full potential. At the same time, it's very important to be strong in a narrow repertoire before you branch out too much, otherwise your knowledge will be too superficial and you won't specialize in certain middlegame positions (which is essentially our goal with playing the same openings over a large number of games).

In my case I started out experimenting with a lot of different openings as a beginner to find what I liked, then with the help of my coach at the time I settled on a narrow repertoire I was passionate about and played those lines (with some small adjustments as I become stronger) from 2002-2007 before realizing I was getting jaded with some of my current choices and needed something fresh. I remember the first big change I made of my own accord was ditching the King's Indian after some bad losses in favour of the Nimzo and Bogo-Indian, and I quickly jumped ahead 100 rating points. At some point if you don't broaden your repertoire you become a still target for the opponent's preparation, especially nowadays with computers being so strong.

**' You will get the Najdorf Sicilian more often than rook and f+h pawn vs. rook... '**

**In 2012 you started studying economics at university before dropping out to focus on chess full-time. At what point did you start considering playing**

## chess professionally and what gave you the belief that you could do it?

Right, I wasn't enjoying economics (among other things it was too dry for my liking), whereas chess is something I've been consistently passionate about. In fact I was already seriously thinking about being involved in chess on a professional level for my gap year in 2011, however at this time I did not have a deep knowledge of the chess world and hence I had to find out some things for myself. But in early 2012, when I both understood that it was possible to make a good living as a chess coach and fully appreciated what a full-time job as an employee would entail, I became a lot more motivated to make chess work for me (rather than assuming/believing it could not be done) and by working hard on my own game and helping my students I've succeeded in doing so.

A significant factor in my decision was seeing Ian Rogers make a life for himself out of chess – so I knew that what I was aiming for was possible. In my case Skype has been a huge help in allowing me to coach students all around the world (although my clients are primarily in Australia).

## There's obviously a number of challenges playing chess professionally in Australia - would you consider moving overseas to further your career?

Yes, it's obvious that one can't make a living solely from playing Australian tournaments, due to the relative lack of sponsorship for tournaments and the absence of government support. I have thought about the possibility

of moving overseas. However, I wouldn't really like to be in a situation where I am relying on having a good tournament to be able to support myself. I value the independence that comes from being primarily a chess coach, and it allows me to play tournaments without financial pressure, which would seriously affect the enjoyment element for me.

My current plan is to have at least one specific overseas trip each year as my 'holiday' and work hard between tournaments to maximize my chances of success. If you stay overseas for a long time just playing, it can be easy to lose focus and momentum. However, if I was offered a job as a head national coach or something, obviously I would have to take it quite seriously.

**'A significant factor in my decision was seeing Ian Rogers make a life for himself out of chess'**

**Since turning pro you've achieved quite a few milestones - playing two Olympiads, winning the Australian Championships in 2014 and the Oceania Zonal in July to qualify for the World Cup, crossing 2500-ELO along the way. It seems you've been able to deal with high pressure situations much better than before - the crucial last-round win against**

**Nisipeanu at the 2014 Olympiad and your recovery from a potentially devastating final-round loss against Brodie McClymont to win the Zonal in the playoff are perhaps the best examples. Would you agree with this observation? Is mental resilience something you've been working on?**

Yes, I am fairly happy with my progress in the last two years, and I've definitely been working on my mental toughness this year. Having some experience with big games in tournaments makes it easier to handle those situations and not repeat psychological mistakes made in the past. I've





The first game of the match, which proved to be decisive

found exercising much more regularly and intensively this year has made my play a lot more consistent, and I think my coaching business becoming a lot more successful has also contributed to my tournament successes in giving me a good financial basis – with any earnings from tournaments being a handy bonus.

**The Zonal win qualified you for the World Cup in Baku, where it seemed like you would initially play Gelfand until a late change to the players list just before the pairings were finalised meant you would play Harikrishna. How did you prepare and what were your expectations heading in to the match?**

Indeed, it transpired that I was somewhat unlucky with this change of pairing – obviously

both players are super-GMs, however Gelfand lost his Round 1 match to a Chilean IM, so it is fair to say that in hindsight, my odds would have been better against Gelfand than Harikrishna (although Harikrishna was also knocked out early, in Round 2).

There wasn't a lot of time for me to prepare for this match, as I only knew the pairing a few weeks beforehand, and I was also quite busy with coaching and writing before leaving to play the World Cup. I had worked on specific openings to play against Harikrishna, and I understood that because he plays so many openings, this match would probably be decided not so much on opening knowledge but on who is more comfortable in the arising position. So I decided to stick to systems where I felt I could target my opponent and where he would feel uncomfortable, without

compromising too much on my own comfort level with the position.

I also played practice matches (in the style of the World Cup) against two strong Grandmasters and was happy with how those matches went – and while that didn't translate into success at the World Cup, I learned a lot from the games and I think the work I've done for this event will contribute to better results in the near future.

I felt that for this match, it would be important to try and hold the draw with Black, and exert some light but constant pressure with White, and that my odds would improve quite significantly in a tiebreak, as my opponent is generally a bit stronger in classical chess.

### **Can you give us a short summary of how your games went?**

Sure, in the first game I surprised my opponent with a Flank Openings system I hadn't played much in the database, and my opponent played a counter-surprise. When I play in Australia I find that generally when someone plays a surprise they are bluffing to some extent and haven't ironed out the details, but when you are playing a 2600+ GM and they surprise you, they usually have looked at the lines at home already. In any case, we followed theory, but I hadn't looked at this Double Fianchetto system for a while, however my opponent was also struggling to remember his home analysis (which proved to be more detailed than mine).

However the main problem for me was that I played way too slowly – playing my first tournament game ever with this format and participating in the World Championship cycle, along with playing a higher-rated player, led me to constantly second-guess myself instead

‘ The main problem for me was that I played way too slowly ’

of playing the obvious moves quickly based on my initial calculations. Then when I did get a better position, I made another mistake I know to avoid – looking for a way to totally prove that I was much better rather than playing an obvious and good move that would preserve

my advantage. When I saw several of the top players looking closely at my game, I took it as a confirmation that I had a big opportunity and after using way too much time, I played a bad move, made a lot more mistakes in the endgame (some the result of time pressure) and lost.

With these two classical games, if you lose with White against a super-GM you are more or less a goner unless they choke, so I decided my best chance for the second game was to play a normal opening that I was comfortable with and had prepared (rather than going crazy trying to attack), and play quickly so I would not doubt my calculations. Unfortunately I made a quite simple oversight in one key variation which led me to make a desperate and incorrect exchange sacrifice instead, but I got away with a draw by finding some good defensive moves to liquidate all the pawns on one side of the board after he missed a win.

In any case, I learned a lot from these two games and I think that the next time I play in the World Cup I will be a lot more confident and not allow the magnitude of the event to cloud my objectivity over the board.

### **What were your impressions of Baku and the organisation of the World Cup?**

Baku is a very nice city, the architecture is quite impressive and there is a deep culture in the country. The organization of the World Cup meanwhile has been great, the players were taken care of well in the official hotel



and during the games. It was also very nice to briefly communicate with some of the world's strongest players – it's a particularly good feeling when they initiate the conversation! It shows that the top players in general are very good people and not 'elitist' as such.

**What are your upcoming tournaments plans? Have you set yourself some goals you'd like to achieve now that you've won perhaps the biggest tournaments in Australia?**

I will be playing the Malaysian Open in late September and then travelling to the Isle of Man Open in early October before returning to Sydney. Then I have the MCC Hjorth Open in November, the Australasian Masters in December and the Australian Championship in January, all in Melbourne. We will see after

that – although if I do exceptionally well in the Malaysian Open and Isle of Man Open I may consider a second trip this year, possibly to the London Chess Classic and Al Ain Open.

As far as goals go, my main aim is to become as strong a chess player as possible. However I think the logical steps from here would be to start winning some of the strong open tournaments in Asia and to get my FIDE rating over 2600. At the time that happens I should have a pretty good idea of what direction to go next. My long-term goal as a coach is to attain the FIDE Senior Trainer title (which is even more exclusive than the Grandmaster title), and it would be nice to write a very high-quality book at some stage.

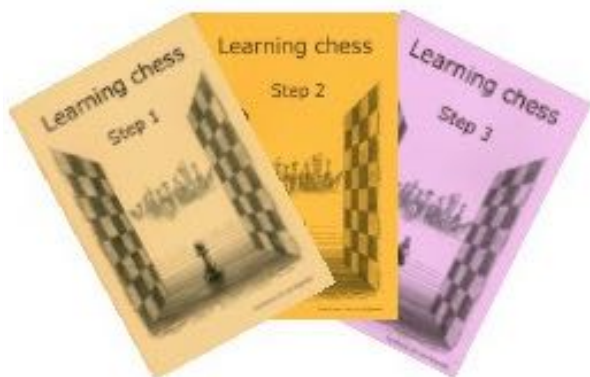
Thanks for talking to us and good luck for your next tournaments!

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# Chesslife



**Illingworth, Max** 2517

**Harikrishna, Pentala** 2743

World Cup 2015 Baku R1.1



**Game Annotated  
by IM Illingworth**

I didn't have a great deal of time to prepare for this Round 1 match as the pairings were only confirmed a few weeks before the start of the World Cup, and my opponent has a very broad repertoire so it wasn't easy to guess what he would play. However I'd done some preparations and decided to go with what I was comfortable with, and hope to take him to tiebreaks where I felt my chances would be greater. One unique feature of matches compared to open tournaments is that you are quite happy to draw as Black, as it neutralises the opponent's White pieces and gives you the chance to press in the next game.

**1.Nf3** I couldn't see a hole in my opponent's Nimzo/Queen's Indian repertoire, and he played too many systems against 1.e4 for that move to be practical, so I went for 1.Nf3 to move order him out of certain Nimzo/QID lines. I also figured it would have a nice surprise factor.

**1...Nf6 2.c4 b6** This wasn't really a surprise, as in a very recent game against Mamedyarov he went for 2...e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 c5 and it was logical that I would be

ready for this. Personally I think this Nimzo-English version is a bit better for White than the pure Nimzo as in many cases White benefits from having the pawn on d3 instead of d4 (covering the e4 square and not blocking the long diagonal for the queen's bishop).

**3.g3 c5** However this was a bit of a surprise as my opponent had never played the Double Fianchetto or Hedgehog before. Of course allowing the Symmetrical is the price you pay for starting with 1.Nf3! (3...Bb7 4.Bg2 g6 is what he had done in two games in 2014, but I think White can obtain a slight pull with (4...e6 5.O-O Be7 6.d4 move orders Black out of certain QID variations.) 5.d4 Bg7 6.O-O O-O 7.Re1, staying flexible in turn, as Black's system is dependent on meeting Nc3 with ...Ne4 to trade the knight and take control of e4. Without the knight on c3 though, ...Ne4 does nothing and it's not that easy to find a good pawn break for Black otherwise. )

**4.Bg2 Bb7 5.O-O g6** This came as a pleasant surprise as I'd surmised before the match that I would have the best chances for success in relatively tense positions. I thought this decision by him was spontaneous to try and

get me out of my preparation, but it turns out he was fairly well prepared!

5...e6 and playing the Hedgehog setup is the alternative.

**6.Nc3 Bg7 7.d4 cxd4**

(7...Ne4 8.Nxe4 Bxe4 9.d5 O-O 10.Bh3 Bxf3 11.exf3 is quite promising for White, based on his space advantage and pair of bishops.)

**8.Qxd4**

(8.Nxd4 Bxg2 9.Kxg2 deserves attention as an interesting alternative, playing for a space advantage with a later e4, however the direct

9...O-O 10.e4 Qc7 11.b3 Nxe4! looks fine for Black after the semi-forced sequence 12.Nxe4 Qe5 13.Qf3 Qxd4 14.Rb1 f5 15.Ng5 Nc6 16.Rd1 Qc5 17.Rxd7 Ne5 18.Qd5+ Qxd5+ 19.Rxd5 Rfd8 )

**8...d6**

Many years ago I had a very nice win with 8...Nc6 9.Qf4 h6?! 10.Rd1 g5?! 11.Qd2 Na5?! 12.b3 ! Ne4 13.Nxe4 Bxa1 14.Nd4 Bxd4 15.Qxd4 Rg8 ? 16.Ba3 f5 17.Bxe7! , which helped me



win an Australian weekender back in my junior days.)

Naturally Black should avoid the common mistake 8...O-O?! 9.Qh4! as now White achieves the favourable Bh6 swap in one go (compared to the game when Black castled only after White plays Be3, so that Bh6 would take a second tempo).



### 9.Rd1

9.Qh4?! is pointless when Black can reply 9...h6! crossing the Bh6 plan and leaving the White queen rather offside.

**9...Nbd7 10.Be3 Rc8 11.Rac1** I quickly checked to make sure Rac1 was the right move order and not b3 first.

### 11...O-O

11...a6 12.b3 leaves Black with nothing better than 12...O-O regardless.

**12.Qh4** ...Ne4 among other things was threatened, and now I'm almost ready to play Bh6 and start an attack on the Black king.

**12...a6 13.b3** Typical moves in the White attacking sequence are Bh6, Bh3, g4-g5 and Ng5. In fact Black has to be quite precise to not face a very strong White initiative.

**13...Re8** A natural prophylactic move to counter Bh6 with ...Bh8 and thereby keep Black's king relatively safe. The disadvantage is that after g4-g5 Black doesn't have the e8-square as a retreat for his knight.

13...Rc7 is more common to clear the way for Black's queen to move, when White can play 14.Bh3 and the game goes on.

14.g4!? is also quite logical, and maybe even the better move given that Bh3 doesn't pin the knight anymore.

**14.Bh3** Only this move makes sense, to limit Black's options and prepare Ng5 without allowing the exchange of light-squared bishops. Generally speaking Black dreams of playing ...b5 in these structures to eliminate White's space advantage, and usually White can't stop him from achieving it, but hopes that his kingside threats will be more important.

**14...Ba8!?** This curious move is

actually the main line in my opening file and I still deem it the strongest move. It looks funny to retreat the bishop like this, but first it serves as a waiting move (for White to play g4, this will make more sense a couple of moves down the track) and second, in some lines the bishop will be safer on a8 than b7.

A recent super-GM game went 14...Rc7 instead, but after 15.g4! Qa8 16.Bd4 h6?! 17.g5 hxg5 18.Nxg5 e6 19.Be3 Qb8 20.Bf4 ± White had a huge advantage already and should have won in ½ - ½ (50) Caruana,F (2808) - So,W (2779) Saint Louis 2015

**15.g4** Once again, I couldn't see another way to exert pressure on the opponent's position.

15.Ne1 is possible, but hardly an ideal move as in general it helps to keep the option of Ng5 for the kingside attack, and Black isn't threatening Bxf3 at all.

**15...b5! 16.cxb5** This seemed the only logical move during the game, but actually it's also possible to opt for 16.g5 Nh5 17.c5! using the pins on the knight, although after 17...Rc7 ( 17...Nxc5?! 18.Bxc8 Qxc8 19.b4 +/- ) 18.b4 dxc5 19.bxc5 e6 20.Ne4 Qe7 21.Nd6 Rd8 22.Bg4 Nxc5! 23.Bxc5 Nf4 24.Ne1 Rxc5 25.Rxc5 Bb7! 26.Nc8 Rxc8 27.Rxc8+ Bxc8 Black's bishop pair and White's unsafe king gave Black full compensation for the exchange in ½

## FEATURE ANALYSIS

- ½ (45) Bu,X (2699) - Sethuraman,S (2576) Sharjah 2014

### 16...Qa5



( 16...Bxf3 17.exf3 Ne5 18.Bg2 )

**17.g5!** I think this novelty (which I found over the board quite quickly, though it took a while for me to play it) is an improvement over 17.Bd2 Bxf3 18.g5 or 18.exf3 Ne5 19.Kg2 axb5 20.g5 Nfd7 with equal chances and one look at White's structure should convince you he is not better.

18...Nd5 19.Bxd7 Rxc3 20.Bxc3 Nxc3 21.Rxc3 Qxc3 22.Bxe8 Bxe2 23.Qf4 Bxd1 24.Qxf7+ Kh8 25.Bc6 Bxb3 26.axb3 Qc1+ with perpetual check in ½ - ½ (37) Mamedyarov,S (2760) - Karjakin,S (2772) Shamkir 2014

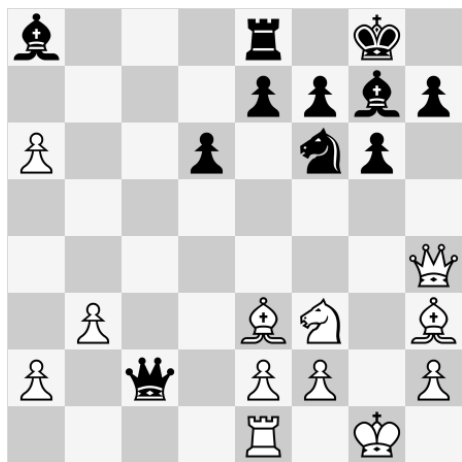
**17...Rxc3 18.Rxc3** This move is correct, but I spent far too long on it - time I could have used later.

18.gxf6 Rxc1 19.Rxc1 Nxf6 is clearly a

worse version for White of the game as a2 is under fire, and if 20.b6 Nd5! takes care of the White queenside, and only Black can be better.

Greediness would be most imprudent after 20...Qxa2?! 21.Bc8 Bd5 22.b7 Qxb3 23.Nd2 + - 18...Qxc3 19.gxf6 Nxf6 20.bxa6 Qc2 21.Re1 This is a key position for the entire Double Fianchetto system and when the match was over my opponent explained that he had completely forgotten his home analysis at this point.

**21...Qxa2 ?** Regaining the pawn at the earliest opportunity loses the initiative and makes White's passed a-pawn the most important factor in the position.



21...Nd5! was the right move, when after 22.Bd7! ( 22.Bd2?! Nc3! threatens the awkward ...Nxe2. ) ( 22.Bh6 Nc3 23.Nd4 Qxa2 24.Bxg7 Kxg7 25.Bd7 Qd2! 26.Kf1 Rf8 =/+ is also good for Black, as White's king is much weaker

with the queens on the board.) 22... Rf8 23.Bh6 Qxa2 24.Bxg7 Kxg7 25.Qa4 Qxa4 26.Bxa4 the machine indicates that the position is equal. White has a nice-looking passed a-pawn but no real way to make use of it, however it does tie up Black's pieces enough.

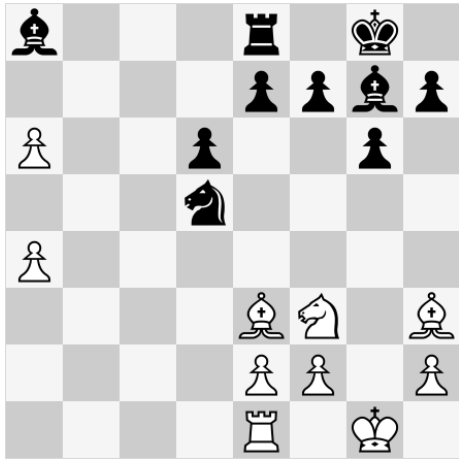
21...Ne4?! doesn't work because there are extra possibilities with Ng5 compared to after ...Nd5:

22.Bd7 Rd8 23.Ng5! Nxg5 24.Qxg5 and now Black can't take on d7 because of Rc1, however 24...Bf6 25.Qg4 Rxd7 26.Rc1 Qe4 27.Rc8+ Kg7 28.Qxe4 Bxe4 29.a7 and a8=Q also favours White, due to his outside passed pawns supported quite well by the e3-bishop.

**22.Qa4! Qxa4 23.bxa4** Now my king safety is not an issue, and White has the advantage. However during the game I vastly overestimated the extent of my advantage and on the next move used most of my time looking for an extremely strong continuation that wasn't there.

**23...Nd5 24.Nd4?** This is a totally wrong decision - I wanted to play Nb5 to support my passed pawns but it is too slow and in the meantime my h3-bishop will end up out of the game.





24.Rb1 is what I spent some time calculating among other things.

24...Nxe3

24...Nc3 was my reason for rejecting Rb1, but White can play 25.Rb2 Nxe2+ 26.Rxe2 Bxf3 27.Re1 f5 28.a7 Ba8 29.Rb1 d5 30.Rb8 Kf7 31.Bb6! and Bd8 will finish Black.

25.fxe3 e6

25...Bxf3 ? 26.exf3 Ra8 27.Bf1 is a line I saw to be good for me during the game, but then somehow I forgot I had Bf1 in this line when thinking for too long over my move.

26.a7 Kf8 27.Kf2 Ke7 28.Rb8 d5 with equal chances and I don't see how White can make progress as his bishop is incapable of joining the action.

24.Bd2! is obviously the right move, not allowing Black to kill White's dynamism with a trade on e3, and

opening ideas of Rb1 or Rc1 now that Nc3 is not a big problem anymore:

24...Nc3 Black would end up in hot water after 24...e6?! 25.Rc1 h6 26.Bg2 Kf8 27.a7 g5 28.e3 ± and the a7-pawn is a major headache for Black, and White can play moves like Nd4 to help support it.

25.Bxc3 Bxc3 26.Rc1 Bb4 27.Bc8! Bc5 28.Bb7 and White is much better as the a8-bishop is paralysed and the e8-rook is stuck defending it, while White can bring his knight over to help support the pawns. I had seen this Bc8-b7 idea but I felt I deserved more than this because I couldn't prove this was winning. Which is quite irrational really.

**24...f5!** This move hadn't occurred to me, but once my opponent played it I realised I was now in real danger and had to look for a way to draw the game.

**25.Nb5** Dealing with the threat of ...f4.

**25...Nxe3 26.fxe3 Bh6!** This move is more unpleasant to counter as it avoids 26...Rc8 27.e4! , a trick I had ready to save myself. The point is that after 27...Bxe4 28.Bg2 the a7-pawn will severely tie up Black's pieces now that the light-squared bishops are coming off, and after 28...Ba8 29.Bxa8 Rxa8 30.a7 with equal chances White should have any problems making a

draw.

**27.Kf2 Rc8** By this stage I was already starting to get low on time, even keeping in mind that the players gain half an hour on the clock once move 40 is completed.

**28.Rb1** This is the only option I could see during the game. The point of 26...Bh6 can be seen after 28.Bg2? Bxg2 29.Kxg2 Bxe3.

28.Rg1 and Bg2 is an alternative pointed out by the machine, however after 28...Kf7 29.Bg2 d5 30.a7 Bf8 the g2-bishop is completely out of the game, and Black is simply better.

**28...Kf7!**

**29.a7 Rc4!** This is very consistent play, as a slow move like 29...Ke8 gives White time to go for 30.Nd4 and Rb8 to establish a queenside bind.

**30.a5 Ra4**



## FEATURE ANALYSIS

**31.Nc7?!** Grabbing the piece was totally impractical as Black gets a lot of pawns in return and White will have serious problems with his piece coordination in the resulting position. Actually during the game I thought my opponent had just blundered the piece away and didn't think too much of the move.

31.Rb3 Rxa5 32.Bg2 d5 33.Nc7 e6 34.Nxa8 Rxa7 is also not so easy for White to draw, as after 35.Nb6 Rb7 he is unable to free the knight from the pin.

31.e4! was the right way, deflecting one of Black's pieces: 31...Rxe4

( 31...Bxe4 32.Rb3 with equal chances and Bg2 will hold the draw. )

32.Rb3 Rf4+ 33.Rf3 Ra4 34.Bg2! Bxf3 35.Bxf3 Rxa5 36.a8=Q Rxa8 37.Bxa8 and this endgame is just a draw. I had looked into e4 ideas when the Black rook was on c8, but it didn't enter my mind at all here.

**31...Ra3! 32.Nxa8 Bxe3+ 33.Kg2?!** This is a mistake, as my bishop on h3 will remain out of play for a long time.

33.Kf1 Rxa5 34.Nc7 Rxa7 35.Nb5 Ra4 36.Bg2 was correct, although Black's pawns are still quite strong and with the better opposite-coloured bishop to boot so it's still not so easy for

White to draw in practice.

**33...Rxa5 34.Rb7**

I could still have corrected my mistake with 34.Nc7 Rxa7 35.Nb5 Ra4 36.Kf3. However I had no time on the clock but the 30 second increment and was playing active moves.

**34...Bxa7 35.Nc7 Bd4!** A very unpleasant move, keeping my knight dominated by the bishop.

**36.Rb3?** I was quite worried about Ra3, leaving my king on g2 stuck defending the h3-bishop, however the right way to cover that was 36.Nb5 Be5 37.Kg1, when my bishop reenters the game with Bf1, although of course Black is still better after 37...Kf6 38.Bf1 g5

**36...Rc5! 37.Nb5 Be5** Now my problems are increased as ...Rc2 is threatened, simply taking away one of my pawns.

**38.Rb4**

38.Rb1 Rc2 39.Kf2 Bxh2 40.Bg2 Be5 is a better version of what happens in the game, but I still think with four pawns for a not very useful knight, Black should win.

38.Na3 might be best to stop Rc2 and plan Nb1-d2-f3 at some point, without giving up the h2-pawn.

**38...Rc2 39.Kf2 Bxh2 40.Nd4 Rc3 41.Nf3 Be5**



After this game I thought the ending was losing for me, but now I think I can draw it with best play - but not with what I did in the game.

**42.Nxe5+?**

42.e4! offered better chances of defending and after 42...Rc2+ 43.Kf1 Kf6 ( The problem with 43...f4 is that following 44.Ng5+ Kg7 45.Ne6+ Kh6 46.Bg4 Black's king and pawns are stuck, so White can probably still hang on to the draw. )

44.Nxe5 dxe5 45.Rb6+ e6 46.Bg2 and the key difference here compared to the game is that White threatens exf5 and Bd5, and by getting rid of one of Black's pawns quickly, he will be able to save the game.

**42...dxe5** Now the ending is just a win for Black because he will play ...e4, charge the g- and h-pawns down



the board and leave White without a defence while the king backs up. It's remarkable how useless the bishop is in fighting back against the pawns.

### 43.Bf1 h5 44.e3

44.e4 was probably still the best try, though Black should still win after 44...e6! keeping the pawns united.

### 44...Rc2+ 45.Be2

or 45.Ke1 Rc1+ 46.Kf2 e4 and Black will play ...e6, ...Kf6, ...g5 and ...h4, and White will not be able to stop everything at once.

45...g5 46.Ke1 g4! Now after my

**Harikrishna, Pentala** 2743

**Illingworth, Max** 2517

World Cup, Baku 2015 R1.2

failure to activate my pieces, Black just wins,.

### 47.Bc4+

I had missed that after 47.Bd3 Rc1+ 48.Kd2 Black wins with 48...!

**47...Kf6 48.Rb6+ Kg5 49.Bf7 g3 50.Rg6+ Kh4 51.Bd5 Rf2 52.Rh6 Kg4 53.Bc4 Kf3 54.Rxh5 Kxe3 55.Rg5 f4 56.Bd5 e4 57.Re5 Re2+ 58.Kd1 Kf2 59.Rg5 f3**

## 0 - 1

This game will have much briefer annotations as I ended up with a fairly self-explanatory fortress position quite quickly. Which doesn't help much for a must-win game, but it sure beats losing!

**1.e4** I was a bit surprised by my opponent's opening choice, as I thought he would just kill the game with the Torre. However I think my opponent was keen to win the match 2-0!

**1...c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 a6** While many players would go for something very sharp in such a must-win game, I figured my best chances would lie in playing something I felt fairly comfortable with and knowledgeable about, and my move order also served to surprise my opponent.

5...Qc7 is the standard Taimanov move order.

**6.Be2 d6 7.O-O Nf6 8.Be3 Be7** My opponent started thinking for a while, realising that we would soon be in a sharp main line Scheveningen (which suited me just fine) and looking for a way out to make the position relatively simple.

**9.a4 O-O 10.Nxc6** I saw this idea over the board despite not considering it in my preparation, but I was quite happy

with the arising position at first.



10.f4 Qc7 11.Kh1 transposes to the main line of the Classical Scheveningen, with far more nuances than can possibly be explained in a few lines.

### 10...bxc6 11.a5

If White doesn't fix the queenside, the trade on c6 would have no point.

### 11...c5?!

I played this move quite quickly, having surmised that because I played far too slowly in the first game (doubting myself and second-guessing my calculations all the time, I should play fast and confidently in this game. There's nothing objectively wrong with this move, but it allows White to greatly simplify the position.

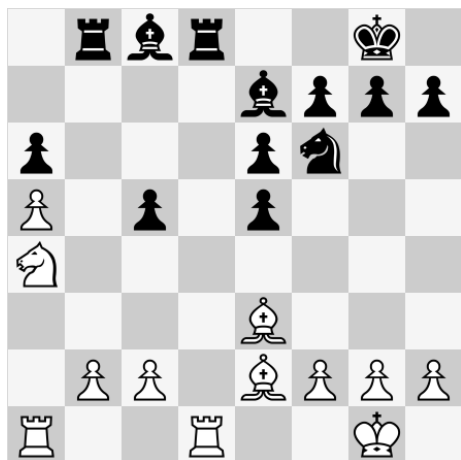
11...Bb7 12.Qd3 c5 was the correct move order, to eliminate the option of e5.

## FEATURE ANALYSIS

**12.e5!** I saw this idea the instant I played 11...c5, however it was too late to go back.

**12...dxe5 13.Qxd8 Rxd8 14.Na4 Rb8 15.Rfd1?!**

During the game we both thought this move was quite strong, but actually it has a tactical issue we both missed (or at least I missed).



15.b3 is best, although here the exchange sack I played in the game with 15...Rd4! actually works well, as c2-c3 would turn the b3-pawn into a weakness, but 16.Bxd4 cxd4! gives Black great compensation as he can place a knight on c3 soon and a bishop on b4 to freeze the whole position.

**15...Rd4?** This move is just bad of course, but I played it first because

I thought I was clearly worse if I lost the c5-pawn as then the a6-pawn also becomes a target, and second because I had miscalculated the following important variation:

My original intention (when I first saw the option 15.Rfd1) 15...Rxd1+! 16.Rxd1 Nd5 is actually working for Black! 17.Bc4

I thought I was losing a piece after 17.Bxc5 Bxc5 18.Nxc5 Rxb2 19.c4, overlooking that the bishop on e2 is hanging! Black is simply much better after 19...Rxe2 20.cxd5 Rc2 21.dxe6 fxe6

17...Nxe3 18.fxe3 g6 and with an extra pawn and the bishop pair, only Black can win from this position.

**16.Bxd4 cxd4?** Another mistake, although fortunately I am not fully punished for this one. I can't really explain why I went for this recapture over exd4, since as soon as I recaptured (and I did so very quickly)

I realised that c3 was horrible for me as I can't avoid the position opening for his rooks.

16...exd4 gives Black partial compensation for the exchange based on the bishop pair and strong centre, however White will keep an advantage by opening files quickly with 17.Nb6 Bb7 18.c3 e5 19.Rac1 followed by cxd4 or b4, with an indisputable advantage.

**17.c3!** At this point I was disgusted with myself for playing so woefully over the last few moves and was basically looking for moves that meant I didn't have to resign from this point on.

**17...Bd8!** Swapping off White's queenside pawns and holding the position with pawns all on one side is the only drawing chances. Everything else will lose quite prosaically.

**18.cxd4** Immediately after the game Nakamura indicated that White should play 18.Nc5! to preserve the a-pawn, and indeed this just wins after 18...Rxb2 19.Bxa6 Bxa6 20.Nxa6 Nd5 21.cxd4 Nc3 22.Re1 exd4 23.Nc5 and the passed a-pawn is decisive.

However my opponent played the automatic capture quite quickly, probably believing he would win the a6-pawn by force.

18...exd4 19.Rxd4 ?

19.Nc5 would still be easily winning.

**19...Bxa5** Now, despite the engine's extremely optimistic evaluation, I don't think White can win as he can't take my a-pawn without trading off the b-pawn in the process, and if I can play ...Nd5 and improve my a5-bishop's placement, I will be very solid.

**20.Nc5**



20.Rc1! would preserve good winning chances for White.

### 20...Bb6 21.b4

21.Rc1 a5 makes further progress on White's part far from obvious, as the b2-pawn is blockaded and Black has no weaknesses.

21...Nd5 22.Rc4 White prepares to take on a6 as he can't do so immediately: 22.Bxa6? Bxc5 23.bxc5 Bxa6



22...Kf8! This is a quite important defensive move, avoiding any back rank issues.

23.Kf1 My idea was that after 23.Nxa6 Bxa6 24.Rxa6 Nxb4 25.Rxb4 Bxf2+ 26.Kxf2 Rxb4 Black has a draw as White is unable to attack the sole weakness on f7 with three pieces. Black can play ...g6/...Kg7/...h5/rook on the f-file and there's nothing White can do.

23...Bd8 Another key defensive move.

24.Nxa6 This might look like giving up, but after 24.Rb1 Be7 it is very hard for White to untangle, especially as 25.Nd3?! allows Black to activate his other bishop with 25...Bd7 threatening ...Bb5.

### 24...Bxa6 25.Rxa6 Nxb4 26.Ra1 Nd5

Now I draw pretty easily by placing my pawns on light squares, keeping my knight around e7/g8/f6 and using my bishop to tie at least one of his pieces to the defence of his pawns. White can't make any progress.



27.Bf3 Bf6 28.Rac1 Ne7 29.Ra4 g6 30.Ra8 Rxa8 31.Bxa8 h5 32.Be4 Ng8 33.Rc8+ Kg7 34.Rc7 Be5 35.Rb7 Nf6 36.Bc6 Kf8 37.h3 Bd4 38.Ke2 Bc5 39.g3 Kg7 40.f3 Bd6 41.Kf2 Bc5+ 42.Kg2 Bd6 43.h4 Kf8 44.Kh3 Bc5 45.g4 Bf2 46.Rb8+ Kg7 47.Rb2 Be1 48.Rb7 Kf8 49.g5 Ng8 50.Rb8+ Kg7 51.Rb1 Bf2 52.Rb2 Be1 53.Re2 Bc3

54.Kg3 Ne7 55.Be4 Be5+ 56.f4 Bc3 57.Kf3 Kf8 58.Rc2 Be1 59.Rc1 Bd2 60.Rd1 Ba5 61.Ra1 Bc3 62.Ra8+ Kg7 63.Ke2 Bb4 64.Re8 Bd6 65.Kf3 Bb4 66.Rd8 Ba5 67.Rd7 Kf8 68.Ke2 Bb4 69.Rd8+ Kg7 70.Rd7 Kf8 71.Rd8+ Kg7 72.Rd7

I offered a draw and my opponent accepted. All in all, there are many lessons for me to take away from this

match, and I hope to do a lot better in my next World Cup!

1/2 - 1/2

# The Knight Fork

Solutions page 101

The Knight Fork occurs when a knight attacks two or more pieces at once. It is one of the most commonly used tactical themes - because of the way the knight moves, it can attack other pieces without being threatened by them. Often, the knight fork involves attacking the opponent's king and another one of their pieces - the king is forced to move out of the check and then the knight can take the other attacked piece.

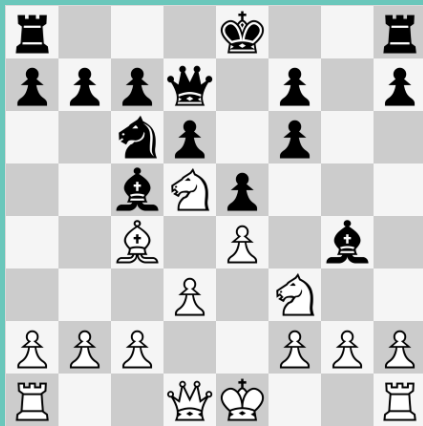
The position below is a good example of a knight fork. Black's last move was Bf6-Bb2. With the e7-square now unprotected, White can play 1. Ne7+ Kf8 2. Nxf5 winning a piece and a decisive advantage.



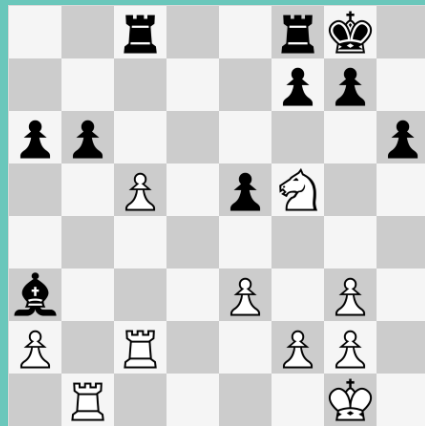
To solve the puzzles on the next page, you'll need to use a knight fork to win material. Remember - a knight is worth 3 points, so you can try and trade it for a more valuable piece such as a queen (9 points) or rook (5 points).

The puzzles are arranged to get increasingly difficult as you solve each one - the bottom three are particularly tricky. Happy solving!

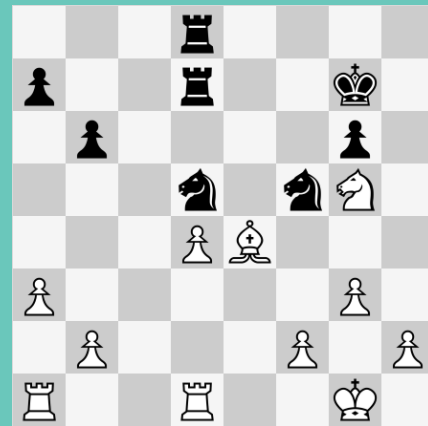




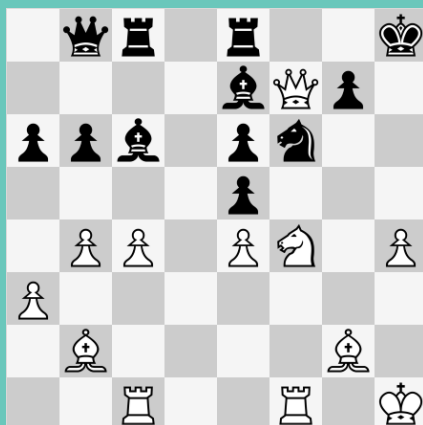
1. White to move



2. White to move



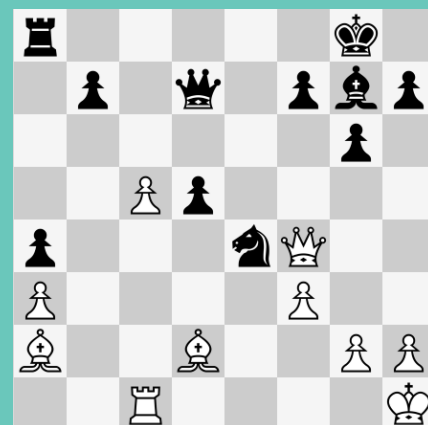
3. White to move



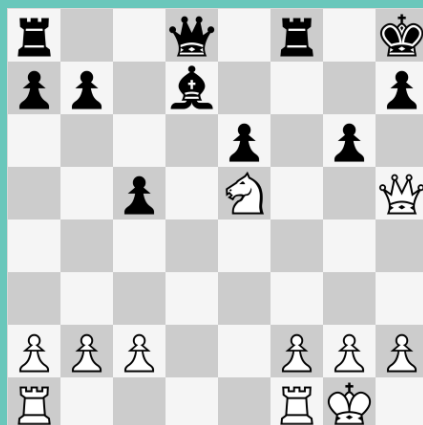
4. White to move



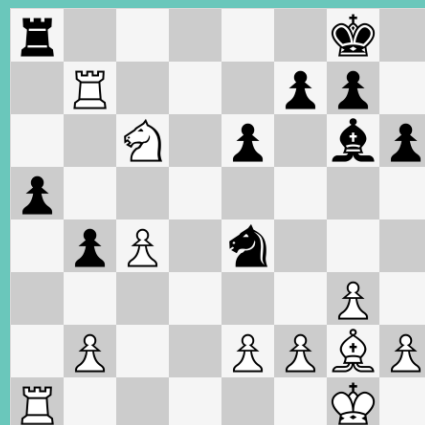
5. White to move



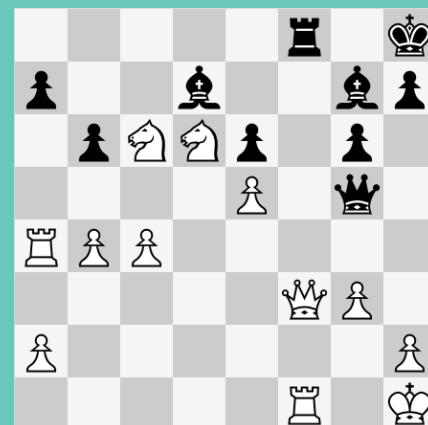
6. Black to move



7. White to move



8. White to move



9. White to move

# SAMUEL LIPSCHÜTZ – A LIFE IN CHESS

A BOOK REVIEW BY IM GUY WEST

**Stephen Davies 2015 - McFarland and Co. Hardback - 399 pages.  
RRP US \$15  
(Also available as an E-Book)**

**S**tephen Davies is a tournament chessplayer who lives in the picturesque Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne. We are acquainted through chess but coincidentally he and his wife also happen to know my mother-in-law. Stephen was kind enough to give me a copy of his new book to review, and given the rarity of Australian authored chess books I was intrigued enough to accept the task.

Why on earth though, would anyone want to read a book about an obscure American chessmaster from the 19th century? A valid question, but there is an equally valid answer.

Lipschütz entered the stage of world chess during an exceptionally interesting period

in the game's history, the 1880s and 90s. He joined the Manhattan Chess Club in 1883, only two years after the death of Billy the Kid and a year after the death of Jesse James. Doc Holliday still lived in the wild country west of the Mississippi and Harry Longabaugh (The Sundance Kid) would have been just 20 years old. Stephen Davies could just as well have chosen any New York based chessmaster from the same period as his main protagonist, and it was by accident really that he became fascinated by the life of Samuel Lipschütz. I won't spoil the story of how this happened, as he explains it in the preface to the book.

For those of you who are not students of chess history, the American chess genius Paul Morphy retired from the game in 1859, only about 25 years before the period that Davies' book deals with. Obviously Morphy's dominance of the chess world, underlined by his triumphant tour abroad where he crushed many of the renowned European



masters and was hailed as the world's best player, must have been writ large over the chess culture of the time. The 'New World' was riding high on confidence and, especially post-Morphy, began producing some very strong players who feature prominently in the book. Not only were strong home-grown heroes like Captain George MacKenzie, Max Judd, Jackson Showalter, Frank Marshall and others coming to the fore, immigration from Europe, of which Lipschütz (from Hungary) was an example, gifted the United States some superb players, most notably the man who was to be recognised as the first official World Chess Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz himself.

The first chapter of the book starts slowly, spending a lot of time establishing the somewhat shaky fact that Lipschütz' given name was in fact Samuel, rather than Solomon, Salomon or various other unSamuelish possibilities. After that, however, the author starts to hit his stride.

Let me say at the outset that this book epitomises the expression 'labour of love'. It contains 399 pages of meticulously researched material, including 249 games, frequently with annotations by

various parties of the day, most notably Steinitz, who is somewhat given to entertaining pontification. This commentary is sometimes mischievously refuted with the help of modern computer analysis by the author.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the book is the perspective it gives you on the evolution of the game. The best players

‘ Let me say at the outset that this book epitomises the expression ‘labour of love’ ’

in the world, although prodigiously talented and possessing great combinative flair, can be seen to make trivial blunders, both tactical and positional, in almost every game. It's an obvious fact, but perhaps not widely appreciated, that the journeyman grandmaster of today would effortlessly crush the world's best players of the late 19th century. The level of tactical discipline these days can't be compared to what it was in a time when the so called 'Romantic' era of chess had still not entirely

succumbed to Steinitz's 'Modern' school. If you want to feel good about your chess just look at any of the many diagrams in this book and spot the often simple refutation to the mistakes of famous players.

Davies' style is very understated and he doesn't intrude into the narrative much at all, relating facts painstakingly garnered from historical books and newspaper records of the time. It's a vast body of historical information, quite detailed and academic, but seduces you more and more as you continue.

There are many entertaining references, en passant, to famous icons of the times like Ajeeb, the American version of the chess 'automaton' which was of course operated by a small stunted but skilful chessplayer hidden in the cramped confines of the contraption. A section about the great New York blizzard of 1888, which brought the city to a standstill for several days, makes very interesting reading.

The reader is like a fly on the wall, observing the goings on of the Manhattan and New York chess clubs and various venues around the US and the unique personalities who lived and played there,

or visited America's thriving chess scene from abroad. And visitors there are many... such famous names as Joseph 'The Black Death' Blackburne from England and Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin, the great Russian master, do battle with our hero. Dr Johannes Zukertort of Poland and later the UK seems to be hanging around a lot in the early part of the book. If you want to read an hilarious account of Zukertort's embellishments of his own biography, the paragraph on that subject in Wikipedia makes very amusing reading. After a panoply of dashing deeds and long-winded achievements it concludes with the priceless words, 'There is some truth in the last sentence...'

Certainly what I loved most about the book was this wonderful menagerie of colourful characters that inhabit its pages. Of course we all know that chess-players can be marvellous caricatures of humanity, kaleidoscopes of human frailties and noble qualities fighting for ascendancy in the one person. Add to this the focus on elegant phraseology and gentlemanly discourse of that era and you find some truly hilarious descriptions of players and events, mostly from the newspaper correspondents of the day.

Steinitz's writings are a great source of amusement too, as he was a notoriously prickly character, in no doubt as to his own importance. He was continually feuding with one rival or another, especially Dr Zukertort, whose defeat in match play earned Steinitz the title of official World Champion. Steinitz once accused the famous problemist Sam Loyd of misappropriating funds, which caused quite

'What I loved most about this book was this wonderful menagerie of colourful characters that inhabit its pages'

a bunfight for a while. Steinitz became a naturalised US citizen in 1888, shortly after Lipschütz in the same year.

There appears to have been nothing remarkable about Lipschütz's personality, but the reader tends to identify with him as the book progresses and he is certainly not unlikeable in any way. During his match with Eugene Delmar, one of the leading New York masters, the Albany Evening

Journal published an irreverent summary of the two contestants, with the kind of endearing penmanship already referred to. The description of Lipschütz, after mentioning his various credentials which culminate in losing (by an honourable score) a match against the 'gallant Captain MacKenzie', included the following line:

'Lip is of a quiet disposition, not given to wind.'

What a nicely crafted description. No doubt if "Lip" had emigrated to Australia he would have transformed into "Lippo". Later in the book Lipschütz is described in a pen portrait in the New York Times as having, 'a good forehead and prominent nose', possibly an oblique reference to his Semitic origins. Indeed, writers of the time seem to have something of an unnatural obsession with noses, as the correspondent from The Sun described him as follows:

'Mr Lipschütz is a slim, round shouldered gentleman, with a rather pale, striking face and a prominent nose that would have made him a Captain in the days of Napoleon Bonaparte, who favoured men with large noses.' I must pay more attention to my opponent's noses in future. Lev



Polugaevsky had an impressive proboscis, I recall.

The correspondent from the Albany Evening Journal who so appreciated his lack of bluster, or flatulence as the case may be, is clearly parochial, as shown by his barely concealed lampooning of Lipschütz's opponent.

'Mr Delmar – the delightful and dashing Delmar, is also well known to all American chessplayers. In fact, he has been in a chronic state of well-knownness for the last quarter of a century or thereabouts. Mr Delmar is a player of the most wonderful abilities and he could easily down all adversaries, both living and dead, and even Mr Steinitz is not of much account in his precious opinion. Fortunately, however, for Steinitz, MacKenzie and the other small fry, Delmar's play is characterised by the greatest forbearance, and never during his long career has the terrible force of his secret strength ever been displayed against an adversary and his scores, therefore, do not bear the faintest semblance of what he 'could do' – some other time.' Ouch!

A typical example of the amusing little feuds of the time is given when mention is made of an article in the New York Times in 1888 in

which the writer diverges from a rambling review of a seminal work by George Hatfield Dingley Gossip into a criticism of Steinitz for asserting that he was a better player than Morphy. This dubious claim was based on the notion that he had benefited from advances in chess theory since Morphy's playing days and was no doubt emboldened by Morphy's premature death by stroke four years earlier.

Steinitz has been commonly depicted in literature as a cantankerous old curmudgeon who may have possibly been a bit mad, but his unsurpassed skill at the time, prodigious writings on the game and total immersion in the chess scene made him the 'grand fromage' of the day, so many of the disputes and personality clashes seem to have coalesced around him and his supporters and detractors. Mind you, Steinitz did graciously concede as early as 1887 that he was somewhat over the hill and no longer deserved the title of World Champion. It's possible that negative depictions of Steinitz may have been exaggerated by the so called 'Ink War' that erupted in print between aficionados of the old 'Romantic' style and his new 'Modern' school of chess.

Davies' book also gives a fascinating insight into the perennial obsession that chessplayers have with the status of their sport. It appears that chess benefitted at the time from being regarded as something of an aristocratic game, played by gentlemen. (Women hardly feature in the book at all, as their brains were probably not considered suitable at the time to such a complex task. Fast forward to 2015 and Nigel Short's provocative comments about female chessplayers!) We know that Morphy was mortified at being described as a chess professional, but by the 1880s and the rise of the Modern school, it appears that prizemoney was becoming more acceptable and the notion of professional involvement in what some viewed as an essentially trivial pastime, was losing its stigma. One paragraph I found amusing came from a review in the New York Evening Post of Gossip's aforementioned 'The Chess Player's Manual', to which Lipschütz had written an 'American appendix'.

'In this age we have chess writers, chess players, chess champions, and chess clubs, and there is no danger that the noble game will die or even decay, but it is to be regretted that it has not a stronger hold at the fireside. Properly

speaking it has no rival, but there are amusements, some of them evil, which to a great extent supplant it. Of the young people of the present day probably ten know the value of a flush or full (sic full house), and know it 'for stamps' as they say - where only one knows the difference between a bishop and a knight'.

Current chessplayers, dabbling on the dark side with poker, would do well to note that evil lurks in such seductions!

A possible reason why professionalism might have started becoming more acceptable can be found in some extraordinary tournament structures of the day. For example, the 6th American Chess Congress was a 38 round event with play on almost every day for two months! (Many games were either replayed or adjourned and continued another day, and the record number of games for one contestant was 49.) Mind you, the bizarre Karpov - Kasparov match of 1984/5 was abandoned only after 48 games and 5 months of play, when it was allegedly feared Karpov was close to blowing a head gasket.

One of the Masters who contested the 6th American Chess

Congress, jointly won by Mikhail Chigorin and the underappreciated Max Weiss of Austria, was James Mason. A funny incident is detailed in the book where Mason unwisely visits a bar before a game and comes to the board inebriated, lasting only 8 wobbly moves before being bundled out of the playing area by miffed committee members. Nowadays he would be described as 'tired and emotional',

‘Current chessplayers, dabbling on the dark side with poker, would do well to note that evil lurks in such seductions!’

but the descriptions of the commentators at the time were even more poetic. It reminded me of a more recent incident when Eddy Levi found himself confronted by an under-the-weather Paul Dozsa, who proceeded to fall asleep at the board and ultimately met the same fate as Mason.

There is a funny report of an incident where a spectator, obviously an aficionado of the Romantic school, asked Jackson Showalter, 'Don't you feel ashamed to play

the French?' The Master from Kentucky replied, 'Yes I do, but I can't help it.' This retort could equally well have come from our modern day friend across the ditch, New Zealand FM Michael Steadman.

One of my favourite paragraphs in the book is a description of the colourful GHD Gossip, a personality eerily familiar to all chessplayers. From The New York Times pen portraits in 1889...

'Gossip, with his long flowing beard, looks like one of the old time monks. He has a good shaped cranium, bald at the top, and is a little above medium height. He believes himself to

be one of the greatest chessplayers in the world, and thinks that if everything had gone to his liking he could have beaten all the champions at the tournament. He complained that his chair was too low, and he once attributed a defeat to that. Finally, he got a large ledger and sat upon it. He did, in fact, seem to derive some inspiration from its contents, for he played two or three excellent games afterward.'

Apparently Gossip was beset with



problems in New York, including mistakenly thinking that food and beverages were free of charge. The retelling of his trials and tribulations and how they prevented him taking his rightful place at the head of the field makes delightful reading and left me chuckling to myself for quite some time. Apparently the reason for his 15 move loss to Chigorin was due to drinking bad coffee, despite the fact that Chigorin had partaken of exactly the same brew. His bed gets buried under several feet of snow due to his 'brute of a chambermaid' leaving the window open and he has the misfortune to impale his posterior on some sharp tacks, left butter side up on his chair by a careless workman. Only his contemporary, Mr Delmar, could perhaps rival Gossip in bearing such a terrible burden of bad luck.

The amusing peccadilloes of chessplayers seem to have changed little throughout history. The New York Times described an upset victory by Hanham over Blackburne, thus:

'Major Hanham's hat was tilted to one side in the evening as his chances for beating Blackburne grew brighter and brighter, and when the great London champion resigned, Hanham's hat was tilting

on his ear. It was a great event in his life'.

Our chess forebears were creditably interested in conducting scientific experiments to see which characteristics might confer an advantage on a chessplayer. First there was a celebrated 'married versus single' match, won by the bachelors and, in 1891, a fiercely contested 'baldies versus hirsute' match. Due to some lairising by the full headed Lipschütz, the follicly challenged bonces carried the day and their victory was enshrined in the match report with these words:

'At the end, the laural crowns of victory concealed the absence of hair on the shining craniums of the bald-heads.' Well put, one must concede.

Space prevents me from saying more about this lovingly compiled book, which carries the reader right up to the appearance of the swash-buckling Harry Nelson Pillsbury and finally Dr Emmanuel Lasker, who would hold the chess crown for a record 27 years. Towards the end of his playing days Lipschütz even participates in a consultation game against a team from Havana which includes a young player by the grandiose name of José Raúl Capablanca y Graupera. (As an

aside, I recall that the American IM Jay Whitehead was quite pleased when it was pointed out to him that his surname was the anglicised version of Capablanca.)

I heartily recommend this book for the historical perspective it provides, the humour and truths about chessplayers that remain unchanged over the long sweep of history, and I congratulate one of our own for such a remarkably detailed work and for producing a book that makes a valuable contribution to the worldwide body of historical chess knowledge.

Lastly, I take from this book an excellent phrase, attributed to various culprits but most probably Isidor Gunsberg, to use next time I lose to a more senior player than myself... 'Der alte Goniff hat mir geschwindelt.' (The old crook has swindled me!)

# Neutralising 1.e4 with the Petroff - Part 1

By IM Max Illingworth

There are many situations where a draw with Black is a good result - such as an individual match, team tournament or round robin. If we take a team event, usually the tournament standings are decided by 'match points' (2 points for a match win, regardless of the margin, 1 for a drawn match and 0 for a lost match), and in this case a draw with Black usually brings the team closer to the desired result as the other team members can press with the White pieces.

Naturally, a draw with Black is also desirable against a higher-rated player, and obtaining an extremely solid position is a good step toward this result. Sometimes, by obviously playing to hold the draw, we can make our opponent overpress and then even win the game. When looking up recent games, I noticed the Petroff was played by many of the top Chinese players (especially Wang Yue) and therefore I have centred my article on their approach to this opening.

Of course we shouldn't neglect other great Petroff exponents such as Gelfand, Kramnik, Ivanchuk and

Jussupow, and in correspondence chess it is a favourite of corr-GM Morgado. I will begin our coverage with the old main line.

**Najer, Evgeniy** 2634

**Wang, Yue** 2726

Rus-chT Sochi 2015 (4)

## 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5

3.Nc3 is a common response at the club level, when the Four Knights transposition 3...Nc6 would be my recommendation, but those wanting to stay in Petroff waters can look into (3...Bb4)

## 3...d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4

5.Nc3 is the modern trend, and will be examined in the second part.

## 5...d5 6.Bd3 Nc6!



This Jaenisch system is the main line as the alternative 6...Bd6 7.O-O O-O 8.c4 c6 gives White the initiative, as

demonstrated in the following game: 9.Re1 Bf5 10.Qb3 Qd7 11.Nc3 Nxc3 12.Bxf5 Qxf5 13.bxc3 b6 14.h3 +/- h6 ? 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.Ne5 Bxe5 17.Rxe5 Qd3 18.Rxd5 ± 1-0 (32) Najer,E (2634) - Nisipeanu,L (2654) Jerusalem 2015)

## 7.O-O Be7 8.c4

8.Nc3 is another major trend that will be examined later.

## 8...Nb4 9.Be2 O-O 10.Nc3 Bf5

10...Be6 is the old main line, but it ran into major problems in the early 2000s, such as in 11.Ne5 f6 12.Nf3 Kh8 13.a3 Nxc3 14.bxc3 Nc6 15.Nd2 Na5 16.cxd5 Bxd5 17.c4 Bf7 18.Bb2 f5 19.Bc3 c5 20.d5 Bf6 21.Qc2 b6 22.Bd3 Bxc3 23.Qxc3 ± 1-0 (55) Kasimdzhanov,R (2652) - Adams,M (2731) Tripoli 2004 )

## 11.a3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Nc6 13.Re1

13.Bf4 is harmless as it facilitates exchanges with 13...dxc4 14.Bxc4 Bd6 15.Bg3 Qd7 16.a4 Na5 17.Bd3 f6 18.Nh4 1/2 - 1/2 (18) Zupe,M (2373) - Haba,P (2516) Austria 2003 18...Bxd3 19.Qxd3 g6 with equal chances

In general, minor piece trades favour Black here due to his slight space disadvantage.

13.cxd5 Qxd5 is likely to transpose to the main game. One exception is if White charged forward with 14.c4 ( 14. Re1 Rfe8 transposes to the game, as does 14.Bf4 Rac8 15.Re1 Rfe8 )



14...Qd6 15.d5, however it is hard to believe this can be effective when White is behind in development, and the 15...Ne5 16.Nd4 Bd7 17.a4 Rfe8 18.Nb5 Bxb5 19.axb5 Nd7 20.Ra2 Nc5 21.g3 a5 22.bxa6 Rxa6 23.Qc2 Rxa2 24.Qxa2 Qa6 25.Qxa6 Nxa6 26.Bf3 Bd6 27.Be3 Nc5 with equal chances of ½ - ½ (32) Radjabov,T (2751) - Jakovenko,D (2737) Elista 2008 is a typical example of what Black is aiming for in this

variation - to blockade White's pawns and hold the position, relying on the fact he has no weaknesses. Obviously with the pawns so fixed here, White's bishop pair can't be considered an advantage.

### 13...Re8 14.cxd5

14.Bf4 will be seen in the next game.

### 14...Qxd5 15.Bf4 Rac8



This is the tabiya position of the 8.c4 variation. White has a very broad choice, but Black is relying on the absence of weaknesses in his position, along with White's slightly

vulnerable queenside pawns.

**16.Bd3** This move may look strange, but it prepares Rb1, and prevents the thematic ...Na5 because of Re5.

16.Qc1!? has been trendy, preparing Qb2 to attack the b7-pawn followed by c4, but Black can play 16...Bf6! 17.Qb2 Na5 18.Rad1

Black's solid grip on the light squares ensured he avoided danger after 18.Ne5 Qb3! 19.Qd2 Bxe5 20.Bxe5 Qe6 21.Qb2 Qb3 22.Qxb3 Nxb3 23.Ra2 c5 1/2 - 1/2 (30) Hicdoenmez, H (1940) - Kubasky, A (2108) LSS email 2008

18...Qb3 19.Qxb3 Nxb3 20.Bc4 Na5 21.Ba2 c6 22.h3 was agreed drawn in two games by the correspondence player Serban, as Black will simply blockade the light squares with 22...b5 with equal chances and make further progress impossible.

16.c4 Qe4 17.Be3 has some historical significance, having been played in one of the Kramnik-Leko World Championship games, but Black experiences no difficulties once the queens come off:

or 17.Qd2 Bf6 18.Bf1 Qc2 19.Rxe8+ Rxe8 20.Qxc2 Bxc2 21.Rc1 Bf5 22.Rd1 Bc2 23.Rc1 1/2 - 1/2 (23) Brkic, A (2607) - Saric, A (2577) Split 2015

17...Qc2! 18.d5 ( 18.c5 was suggested by Tzermiadianos/Kotronias back in 2004, but they didn't consider 18...Bf6 19.Bb5 Qc3! keeping the pressure

on White's centre, and after 20.Ra2 Bg4 Black was entirely fine in ½ - ½ (25) Serradimigni, R (2526) - Velilla Velasco, F (2524) ICCF email 2007, a key point being 21.d5 Bxf3 22.gxf3 Nd4! 23.Bxe8 Nxf3+ 24.Kh1 Qxe1+ 25.Qxe1 Nxe1 with equal chances

18...Na5 19.Nd4 Qxd1 20.Raxd1 Bd7 21.Nb5 Bxb5 22.cxb5 b6 23.Bg4 Rcd8 24.Bf4 and now an improvement over the Greeks' old analysis is 24...Bxa3! 25.Bxc7 Rxe1+ 26.Rxe1 Rxd5 27.Re8+ Bf8 with equal chances and White cannot make progress, as the 28.g3 f5 29.Bf3 Rd7 30.Ra8 Kf7 31.Rxa7 Bc5 32.Bd5+ Rxd5 of ½ - ½ (32) Lowrance, W (2537) - Schuster, P (2506) FICGS email 2010 shows.

16.h3!? is the main alternative, when after the correct 16...h6! White again has a wide choice, but only two serious attempts to pose problems:

17.Nd2 ( 17.Qc1 Qd7 18.Qb2 Bd6 19.Bxd6 cxd6 has proven even easier to play for Black in some OTB games; Nedev offers the improvement 20.Nd2!? to reroute the knight to e3, but I don't see why White should be at all better after 20...d5 21.Bf3 Na5 22.Rxe8+ Rxe8 23.Qa2 Be6 with equal chances

17...Na5 18.Bf3 Qd7 19.Ne4 White needs to keep his pieces active as 19.Nb3 Nxb3 20.Qxb3 c6 21.Be5 b5 22.a4 a6 23.axb5 axb5 24.c4 bxc4 25.Qxc4 1/2 - 1/2 (33) Ni, H (2646) - Wang, Y (2706) China 2013 25...Be6 26.Qc3 Bf8 with equal chances is a totally dead position.

## NEUTRALISING E4 WITH THE PETROFF - P1

19...Rcd8 20.Ra2 b6 21.Rae2 Bxa3  
22.Bg4



and in 1-0 (47) Anand,V (2780) - Fridman,D (2667) Baden-Baden 2013 CBM 153, Andreikin demonstrates that the cold-blooded 22...Be6! , preparing ...f5, would be fine for Black, as demonstrated by the forcing sequence 23.Bxh6 Bxg4 24.Nf6+ gxf6 25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 26.Rxe8+ Kh7 27.Qe1 Kxh6 28.Qe4 Kg7 29.Qa8 f5 30.hxg4 fxg4 31.Rh8 Nc4 32.Qg8+ Kf6 33.Rh7 Qd5 34.Qxg4 Bc1 with equal chances, played in ½-½ (41) Halldorsson,H - Costachi,M ICCF email 2014

### 16...Qd7

It is important to anticipate c4 and Rb1-b5 ideas.

### 17.Rb1 b6 18.d5

18.Bb5 Bxb1 19.Qxb1 Bf6 ( 19... Bxa3? 20.Re3! ) 20.Rd1 Qd5 21.Bg3 Ne7 22.Bxe8 Rxe8 is an entirely safe position for Black, who can tie White up by fixing the queenside pawns, as in 23.Re1 Qc6 24.Qc2 b5 25.h3 g6

26.a4 b4 27.Rc1 bxc3 28.Qxc3 Qxa4 29.Ra1 Nd5 30.Qb2 Qc4 31.Rxa7 Nc3 32.Rxc7 Ne2+ 33.Kh2 Nxd4 34.Nxd4 Bxd4 35.Rxc4 Bxb2 1/2-1/2 (35) Joao,N (2573) - Kunzelmann,F (2464) ICCF email 2009

**18...Bxd3 19.Qxd3 Bf6** The risky-looking 19...Bxa3 has been the preference in correspondence, intending 20.Ng5 g6 21.Ne4 Qf5! 22.Bxc7 Rxc7 23.Nf6+ Qxf6 24.Rxe8+ Kg7 25.dxc6 Bc5 26.Rb2 Rxc6 27.Qd8 Qxd8 28.Rxd8 a5 ! with equal chances and Black had no trouble holding the draw in ½-½ (44) Leko,P (2752)-Gelfand,B (2758) Moscow 2009 CBM 133, or numerous correspondence games following it.

### 20.c4 Ne7

This position is well known to be a dead end for White despite the computer's favourable evaluation, and this game did nothing to affect that.

### 21.h3

21.Ne5 Bxe5 22.Bxe5 f6 23.Bf4 Nf5 with equal chances was rock solid for Black in ½-½ (39) Svidler,P (2742) - Kramnik,V (2743) Dortmund 2006 CBM 114 and indeed all correspondence games from this position were drawn.

### 21...Ng6 22.Bg3 h6

Equivalent is 22...h5 23.Nd4 Rcd8 24.Red1 h4 25.Bh2 Be5 26.Bxe5 Nxe5 27.Qc2 Qe7 28.a4 Qg5 29.Re1 c5 30.Rxe5 Rxe5 31.Nc6 Rde8 32.Nxe5 Qxe5 33.Rd1 f6 34.d6 Rd8 35.d7 1/2-1/2 (35) Petrolo,M (2603) - Yefremov,Y (2558) ICCF email 2012

### 23.Nd4 Be5

23...Rcd8 with equal chances 24.Nc6 Bxg3 25.Qxg3 a6 Once again, White is unable to make use of his space advantage when the position is so simplified, and while the computer keeps giving +/=, in reality Black wasn't in any danger at all.

### 26.Rbd1 Ne7 27.Ne5 Qd6 28.Qf3 f6 29.Nd3 Ng6 30.Qg4 Ne5 31.Nxe5 fxe5 32.Rd3 Rcd8 33.Re4

33.a4 would permit 33...Re7 34.Rde3 Qb4 with equal chances 33...b5 ! Just in time, otherwise Black may experience real pressure based on his vulnerable e5-pawn.

34.Rc3 Also equal is the quiet 34.Ree3 Re7 35.cxb5 axb5 36.Qe2 b4 37.axb4 Qxb4 with equal chances

### 34...Re7 35.Qe2 bxc4 36.Qxc4 Rf7 37.Rce3 Qxd5 38.Qxd5 Rxd5 39.Rxe5 Rd1+ 40.Re1 Rd2 41.R1e2 Rxe2 42.Rxe2 Rf4 43.Rc2 Ra4 44.Rc3 c5 45.Rxc5

Conclusion: White can only hope for a symbolic edge at best in this line,



and as long as Black knows a few key moves, he will achieve a draw without much difficulty.

## 1/2 - 1/2

**Zhou, Weiqi** 2590

**Bu, Xiangzhi** 2662

Danzhou 4th 2013

Here we will wrap up the other options after 8.c4, to further elucidate our general objective in playing the Petroff.

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Be7 7.O-O Nc6 8.c4 Nb4 9.Be2**

9.cxd5 is the Browne variation, made famous by the following spectacular game: 9...Nxd3 10.Qxd3 Qxd5 11.Re1 Bf5 12.Nc3

Alternatively, the sharp and forcing line 12.g4 Bg6 13.Nc3 Nxc3 14.Qxc3 f6 15.Qxc7 O-O 16.Rxe7 Qxf3 17.Rxg7+ Kh8 18.Bh6 Qxg4+ 19.Qg3 Qxd4 20.Rxg6 hxg6 21.Bxf8 Rxf8 22.Rc1 Qxb2 results in this equal position, which was drawn in a number of correspondence games.

12...Nxc3 13.Qxc3 c6 ?

Correct is 13...Be6 14.Re5 Qc6 15.Qa5 Rd8 16.Bf4 O-O 17.Rc1 Qb6 18.Rb5 Qxa5 19.Rxa5 Ra8 20.d5 Bd7 21.Ne5 Bd6 22.Bg3 Bxe5 23.Bxe5 c6 24.dxc6

Bxc6 25.Bd4 a6 26.Re5 Rfe8 27.Rxe8+ Rxe8 28.Be3 Rd8 29.f3 f6 30.Kf2 Kf7 31.h4 1/2-1/2 (31) Naiditsch,A (2678) - Kramnik,V (2772) Dresden 2008 )

14.Bh6!! Rg8

or 14...gxh6 15.Re5 Qd7 16.Rae1 Be6 17.d5! O-O-O 18.dxe6 fxe6 19.Rxe6 ±

15.Re5 Qd7 16.Rae1 Be6 17.Ng5 O-O-O 18.Nxf7 Bxf7 19.Rxe7 Qxd4 20.Rxf7 Qxc3 21.bxc3 gxh6 22.Rb1 + - and White was just winning this endgame in 1-0 (40) Browne,W (2575) - Bisguier,A (2435) Chicago 1974

**9...O-O 10.Nc3 Bf5 11.a3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Nc6 13.Re1 Re8 14.Bf4 dxc4**

This is important, to avoid 14...Rc8 ?! 15.c5 ! +/- with a bind as Black's queenside pawns are virtually immobilised.

**15.Bxc4 Bd6 16.Rxe8+ Qxe8** As usual, every exchange of pieces generally makes it easier for Black to hold the draw.

## 17.Bxd6

17.Nh4 Na5 18.Nxf5 Nxc4 19.Qf3 Rb8 20.Bh6 g6 21.Nxd6 Nxd6 22.Qf6 Nf5 23.Bf4 Qe7 24.Qxe7 Nxe7 is just a completely equal endgame, especially as White's light squares are a bit soft.

To give one correspondence game: 25.Kf1 f6 26.Ke2 Nd5 27.Bd2 b5

28.a4 a6 29.axb5 axb5 30.Ra5 Re8+ 31.Kd3 c6 32.Ra6 Re6 33.g4 Kf7 34.g5 Nc7 35.Ra7 Re7 with equal chances 1/2-1/2 (41) Winckelmann,T (2584) - Cinca,D (2376) ICCF email 2010 )

17.Ng5 Bg6 18.Bxd6 cxd6 transposes to the game.

**17...cxd6 18.Ng5** If White wants to fight for an edge, he needs to play forcefully before Black brings his rook into play; for instance, 18.Qd2 Qd7 19.Re1 d5 20.Ba2 Rd8 21.g3 Be6 22.Nh4 f6 23.Bb1 Bf7 24.Nf5 Re8 25.Rxe8+ Bxe8 with equal chances was soon drawn in ½ - ½ (30) Keuter,K (2494) - Joppich,U (2472) ICCF email 2014

18...Bg6 19.h4 Qe7 20.Qg4 h6



## 21.Nh3

21.h5 has been known to lead to a draw from some games by Wang Yue: 21...Bxh5 22.Qxh5 hxg5 23.Rd1 Rf8 24.Rd3 Qe1+ 25.Kh2 Qxf2 26.Qxg5

## NEUTRALISING E4 WITH THE PETROFF - P1

Qf6 27.Qxf6 gxf6 28.Rg3+ Kh8 29.Rh3+ Kg7 30.Rg3+ Kh8 31.Rh3+ Kg7 32.Rg3+ ½-½ (32) Radjabov,T (2740) - Wang,Y (2752) Medias 2010 CBM 137)

### 21...Qe4 22.Qg3

22.Nf4 was another recent try, however Black was fine after the forcing sequence 22...Ne5 23.dxe5 Qxc4 24.e6

24.exd6 Rd8 ( Black could also take on c3 ) 25.Rd1 Bc2 26.Rd2 Qxc3 27.Qe2 Ba4 with equal chances and while the d-pawn looks scary, correspondence games such as ½-½ (43) Gonzalez Freixas,A (2530) - Bross,H (2589) ICCF email 2007 have demonstrated that Black experiences no objective problems here.

24...fxe6 25.Qxg6 Qxf4 26.Qxe6+ Kh8 27.Rd1 Rf8 28.f3 Qxh4 29.Rxd6 Qg5 30.Rd7 Qc5+ 31.Kh2 Qh5+ 32.Kg1 Re8 33.Qg4 Qxg4 34.fxg4 b6 35.Rxa7 Rc8 with equal chances and the rook endgame was just a draw in ½-½ (53) Radjabov,T (2731) - Giri,A (2797) Tbilisi 2015 )

### 22...Na5

Also good for equality is 22...Rc8 23.Bf1 Ne7 24.Qxd6 Nf5 25.Qb4 a5!? (stopping d5 in response to Nh4) 26.Qxa5 Nxh4 27.Qe5 Qxe5 28.dxe5 Rxc3 29.Nf4 Be4 30.Rd1 with equal chances 1/2-1/2 (30) Vohl,G (2446)

- Nataf,I (2434) ICCF email 2010 )

**23.Ba2 Qc2 24.Bd5 Qd3 25.Qxd6 Qxc3** This had already been seen in a correspondence game and once again White doesn't have a great way to avoid a draw.

### 26.Rf1 Bd3 27.Rd1 Bc2 28.Rf1

33...Qb2 34.Rd1 Qc2 35.Rf1 Qd2 36.g3 Re1 with equal chances will end in a likely draw by perpetual check.

### 28...Bd3 29.Rd1 Bc2 30.Rf1 Bd3

1/2 - 1/2

**Sweircz, Dariusz** 2614

**Li, Chao B** 2711

Bundesliga 2015

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.Nc3!**



This exchange is the modern way to approach 5.d4 and I used to think it offered pretty good chances of an advantage.

8.Nbd2 Nxd2 9.Bxd2 Bg4 10.c3 O-O 11.Re1 Bd6 is totally fine for Black.

8.Re1 Bg4 9.c4 Nf6 10.Nc3 is another major line, which featured in a couple of GM games this year, but it has been effectively neutralised: 10...Nxd4!

( 10...Bxf3 11.Qxf3 Nxd4 12.Qd1 is also fine for Black, as long as he rejects Gelfand's old 12...Ne6 in favour of the machine's 12...dxc4! 13.Bxc4 c5 14.Qa4+ Qd7 15.Qxd7+ Kxd7 16.Be3 Rhd8 17.Bxd4 cxd4 18.Bb5+ Kd6 19.Rad1 Kc5 20.Re5+ Kd6 with either a draw by repetition with 21.Re1, or total equality after 21.f4 Bf8 22.Rxd4+ Kc7 with equal chances )

11.cxd5 Bxf3 12.gxf3 c5 13.d6 Playing to exploit the Black king's central position, however it proves pretty safe on f8 due to White's own development/king safety issues.

13.dxc6 Nxc6 14.Bb5 O-O 15.Qxd8 Bxd8 with equal chances has been the main choice in engine games, but naturally Black is not in real danger in such a position.

13...Qxd6 14.Nb5 Nxb5 15.Bxb5+ Kf8 16.Qe2 Qc7! Not the only move, but the most logical, preparing ...Bd6 and intending 17.Bf4 Bd6 18.Bxd6+



Qxd6 19.Rad1 Qc7 20.Qe3 ( Brenjo's novelty 20.Bd7!? g6 21.Qe7+ Kg7 22.Rd6 Nxd7 23.Rxd7 Qf4 is entirely safe for Black, who will play a rook to e8 on the next move. Perpetual check is an extremely likely result. ) 20... a6 21.Ba4 0-1 (49) Bruzon Batista,L (2669)-Wang,Y (2716) Danzhou 2015 21...b5 22.Bc2 h5 ! and Black will activate his rook via. ...h4 and ...Rh5, while the king is quite secure on f8.

### 8...Nxc3 9.bxc3 O-O

I used to think this move order was less accurate than the more common 9...Bg4, but now I think it's an equivalent move order as you avoid 10.Rb1 ( 10.Re1 O-O transposes to the game. ) 10...Rb8 11.h3 Bh5 12.Bf5! Diagram [#]



which disrupts Black's natural development, e.g. 12...O-O 13.Re1 Bg6 14.Qd3 Bxf5 ( 14...a6 is also fine, as demonstrated by 15.Bxg6 hxg6 16.c4 dxc4 17.Qxc4 Bf6 18.Bf4 Nxd4 19.Nxd4 Qxd4 20.Qxd4 Bxd4 21.Bxc7 Rbe8 22.Red1 Bc5 23.Rd5 b6 24.Bxb6 Bxb6 25.Rxb6 Re1+ 26.Kh2 Re2 1/2

- 1/2 (30) Efimenko,Z (2701) - Li, C (2649) Wijk aan Zee 2011

27.f3 Rc8 28.Rd4 g5 29.Rxa6 Rcxc2 30.Rg4 Rxa2 31.Rxa2 Rxa2 32.Rxg5 g6 with equal chances and of course this is a basic draw.

15.Qxf5 b5 16.Bf4 Rb6 17.Re2 Bf6 18.Rbe1 and in ½-½ (48) Swiercz,D (2614)-Landa, K (2647) Germany 2014, Black could have kept an impregnable position with 18...Ne7 19.Qd3 Ng6 20.Bg3 Qd7 with equal chances

### 10.Re1

10.h3 was considered the disadvantage of 9...O-O, however the light-squared bishop can find other good squares: 10...Re8 11.Rb1 or 11.Re1 Be6 12.Rb1 Rb8 13.Bf4 Bd6 with equal chances ) 11...b6 12.Re1 Bd6 with equal chances and Black had no problems coordinating in 0-1 (67) Nepomniachtchi,I (2714) - Mamedyarov,S (2757) Sochi 2014

### 10...Bg4

This makes sense in conjunction with h3 Bh5, but I'm a bit puzzled as to why Li Chao didn't play 10... Be6 if he wanted his bishop on this square, especially since h3 is a pretty normal move for these positions. Maybe this was his preparation and he played ...Bg4 out of habit? Anyway, after 11.h3 Re8 we transpose to the previous note.

### 11.h3

11.Bf4 is the main line, and here Black must avoid a few landmines to reach equality: 11...Bd6 12.Bxd6 Bxf3! ( 12... Qxd6 ? 13.Bxh7+ Kxh7 14.Ng5+ Kg6 15.Qxg4 f5 16.Qh4 Rh8 17.Re6+ Qxe6 18.Qxh8 Rxh8 19.Nxe6 Ne7 20.Re1 c6 21.Nf4+ + - as occurred in 1-0 (21) Durarbayli,V (2501) - Zeynalov,F (2328) Baku 2010 really should be avoided.

13.Qxf3 Qxd6

Once Black gets to here, he is pretty safe, with White unable to make anything of his momentary initiative.

14.Re3

14.Rab1 b6 doesn't change much. 14...Rae8 15.Rae1 Re7 16.Rxe7 Nxe7 17.h4 Rd8 17...c6!? also makes sense, to limit the White bishop's scope.

18.c4 b6 19.c3 h6 20.cxd5 Nxd5 with equal chances

We are quite intimate with this structure already.

21.Bc4 c6 22.Re5 Nf6 23.Qf4 Qd7 24.g3 Kf8 25.Bb3 1/2-1/2 (25) Grischuk,A (2747) - Kramnik,V (2785) Kazan 2011

It's worth pointing out that the insertion of 11.Rb1 Rb8 favours Black, as after 12.Bf4 Bd6 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 with equal chances there is

## NEUTRALISING E4 WITH THE PETROFF - P1

no Bxh7 tactic now: 14.Bxh7+ ? Kxh7 15.Ng5+ Kg6 16.Qxg4 f5 17.Qh4 Rh8 18.Re6+ Qxe6 19.Qxh8 Qe7! and we can appreciate the difference - the rook on b8 is defended!

### 11...Be6



11...Bh5 12.Rb1 Rb8 transposes to a major line where after 13.Bf4

13.c4 dxc4 14.Bxc4 b5!? 15.Rxb5 Rxb5 16.Bxb5 Bxf3 17.Qxf3 Nxd4 18.Qe4 Nxb5 19.Qxe7 Nd4 with equal chances and ...Ne6 is nothing tangible for White.

13...Bg6 White might also consider 14.Bxg6!? ( 14.Qd3 was addressed in the note to move 9. ) 14...hxg6 15.c4, as played in numerous Solak games, however all of them ended in draws.

One good continuation is 15...Bb4!? 16.Rf1 Be7 asking White to find a more useful move.

17.Qd3 Na5 18.cxd5 Qxd5 19.Re1 or

19.Rb5 Qxa2 20.Bd2 Nc4 21.Bc3 a6 22.Rb3 Na5 23.Ra1 Nxb3 24.Rxa2 Nc1 25.Qc4 b5 26.Qxc7 Nxa2 with equal chances 19...Bd6 with equal chances 1/2 - 1/2 (19) Mary,P (2505) - Kunzelmann,F (2498) ICCF email 2011

### 12.Bf4

12.Rb1 Rb8 13.Nh2! intending Qh5 is a critical try and I don't see how Black fully equalises here, for instance:

13...Qd7 14.Qh5 g6 15.Qf3 b5 or 15... Rfe8 16.Ng4 Bxg4 17.hxg4 a6 18.Bf4 b5 19.g5 +/- and I would rather be White because of the possibility of h-file play.

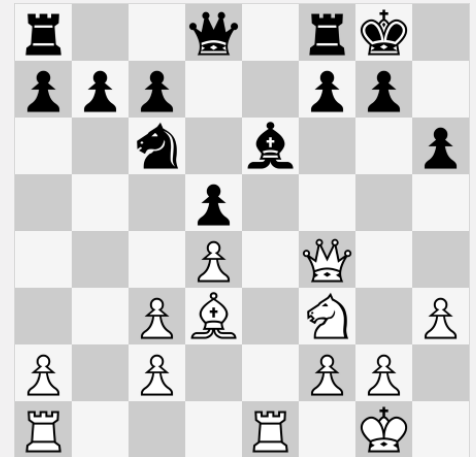
16.Bh6 Rfe8 17.Ng4 Bxg4 18.Qxg4 Qxg4 19.hxg4 a6 20.Bf4 Bd6 21.Rxe8+ Rxe8 22.Bxd6 cxd6 23.a4 bxa4 24.Ra1 a5 25.Bb5 Rc8 26.Bxa4 Ne7 27.Bb3 Ra8 28.Kf1 +/-

and White has the better minor piece and pawn structure, so this is not drawn yet.

### 12...Bd6 13.Qd2

13.Ne5 Nxe5 14.dxe5 Be7 changes the position, but not to White's advantage.

### 13...Bxf4 14.Qxf4 h6



Now Black has consolidated his position and will equalise with normal developing moves.

15.Ne5 Nxe5 16.Rxe5 Qd6 17.Qe3 Rac8 18.Re1 c5 19.g4 Bd7 20.Re7 c4 21.Bf5 Bxf5 22.gxf5 Rc7 23.Rxc7 Qxc7 24.f6 Rd8 25.Kh1 Qc6 26.fxg7 Rd6 27.Qe7 Kxg7 28.Qe5+ Rf6 29.Rg1+ Kh7 30.Qb8 Rg6 31.Rxg6 Kxg6 32.Qxa7 Qe6 33.Qxb7 Qxh3+ 34.Kg1 Qg4+ 35.Kf1 Qh3+ 36.Kg1 Qxc3 37.Qc6+ Kg7 38.Qxd5 Qxc2 39.Qe5+ Kh7 40.d5 c3 41.d6 Qd1+ 42.Kg2 Qg4+ 43.Qg3 Qxg3+ 44.fxg3 c2 45.d7 c1=Q 46.d8=Q Qc2+ 47.Kh3 Qxa2 48.Qd3+ Kg7 49.Qd4+ f6 50.Qg4+ Kf8 51.Qg6 Qe6+ 52.Kh2 Qe2+ 53.Kh3 Qf1+ 54.Kh2

This wraps up our 5.d4 coverage, and we can conclude that Black is extremely safe in these positions, and White cannot hope for an advantage if Black is prepared. Also, from a practical perspective it is quite easy for Black to memorise certain defensive setups that White will not manage to break down.

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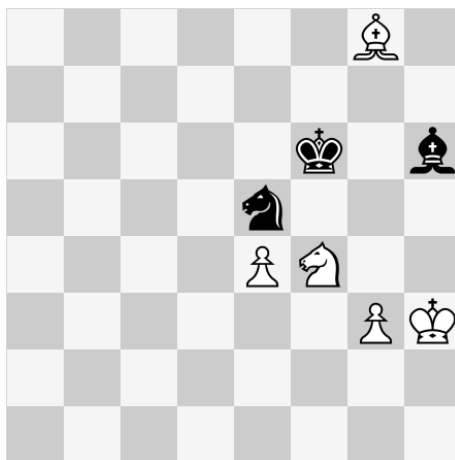


# ENDGAME LESSONS

*with FM Chris Wallis*

In this column, we will look at examples of the mistaken use of 'rules of thumb' in situations where they do not strictly apply.

This mistake appears in a variety of forms; on the one hand, there exist many highly detailed 'theorems' (for example, Bahr's Rule and Centurini's Line) which hold only for a given delicate configuration of pieces; also, there are more general statements and notions (activate the king in the endgame, rooks belong behind passed pawns, exchange when ahead on material, etc.) which we are in the habit of following, but which can lead one astray in subtle situations. It is true that nobody disputes the usefulness of such ideas, in general - but although they can be taken as the default position, we should retain the flexibility to interpret the position differently, as the need arises.



I had been trying to win this ending for a very long time, but failing miserably; in fact, so long as Black maintains the status quo, it shouldn't be possible.

79...Ng6

79...Bf8 is safest - then, 80.Kh4 Bd6 81.Kh5 runs into 81...Nf3, intending all sorts of mischief (eg Ke5, Nd2-f1).

**80.Kg4**

Here we have one of the 'theorems' alluded to above - that, under specific circumstances, the ending B + 2Ps (connected) vs. B (opposite colour) is drawn. The rule, however, only applies if the bishop is already

on the correct diagonal, restraining, with assistance from the king, one of the pawns, and attacking the other [a typical setup of this nature would be: W Kg4, Pf4, Pe4 - B Kf6, Bd6]. This should not be taken to be a general assessment of the ending, and there are many, many positions where the defender gets into trouble with this-material balance - it will be relevant later that the same configuration, but shifted forward, with the pawns on the 6th rank, is losing for Black (see any general endgame text for the theory of these situations).

**80...Nxf4??**

Thus, this is a mistake. 80...Bf8 still draws.

**81.gxf4 Bg7**

81...Bf8 is more critical - the bishop needs to come around to d6 as soon as possible. Even here, it shouldn't be on time, in view of 82.e5+ when the pawns cannot be properly restrained and will reach the 6th rank; 82...Ke7 This is the best practical chance; Black allows an immediate f4-f5, but it

Game 1

Wallis, Christopher

Brown, Andrew

Australian Young Masters, 2010

# RULES OF THUMB?

would be a mistake.

82...Kg7 83.Bc4 Be7 84.f5 Bd8 85.Kf4 and the king will come around to e6 to support f6+.

83.Bc4

83.f5 Bg7 is in fact drawn, in accordance with the rule stated above.

83...Bg7

83...Bh6 84.Bd5 and Black is in zugzwang, since the king needs to control f6 (to prevent a an f5-f6 run), while if the bishop retreats White's king enters via h5.

84.Kh5 Bh8 85.Kg6 and Black is threatened with the loss of his bishop; in fact this is unavoidable due to zugzwang, eg 85...Kf8 86.Kh7 Bg7 87.Bb3.

**82.Kh5??**

82.e5+ Ke7 83.Kh5 wins as after 81... Bf8.

**82...Bf8 83.Bd5** Clearly 83.e5+ Kf5 is out of the question.

**83...Bd6** As the standard draw has been reached, White has nothing better than 84.e5+ Bxe5 85.fxe5+ Kxe5 **1/2 - 1/2**



Diagram Above: Tal (in his classic 'The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal') : 'But here 16. 0-0 should have been given preference. The point is that, although the queens have disappeared, there are still sufficient pieces on the board for the position to have a middlegame character.

Thus the position of the king in the centre, which is certainly favourable in endings, turns out to be double-edged.' This is an impressively deep evaluation; detailed analysis and the course of the game both seem

to confirm Tal's view. The trouble is that it can feel very foolish to castle in such a situation, when the ending seems near - often such 'evacuations' are paid for later with back rank difficulties and a loss of time!

**16...Rac8 17.Bd3**

The most natural move; probably Tal's criticism of it was influenced by the course of the game, since his annotations miss the computer's improvement at move 19.

**17...Bc6 18.f3 Nd7 19.Ne4?!**

19.Rhc1! Bf6 ( Or 19...Ne5 20.Bb5 ) 20.Rab1 was perhaps the best way to arrange the rooks - 20...Ne5 21.Bb5 Bxb5+ 22.Nxb5 Rxc1 23.Bxc1 a6 24.Nd4 seems to be holding on well enough, though the position is more pleasant for Black.

**19...f5 20.Nd2 ?**

20.Nf2 was necessary, to avoid the tactical difficulties of the game.

**20...Nb6** Surprisingly, Tal is probably winning already as a result of 19.Nd2!

**21.Bd4**

21.b5 Be8 22.a4 Rxd3! 23.Kxd3 Bb4

## ENDGAME LESSON

with various threats (...Nxa4, ...Rd8+) is an interesting sideline. )

**21...e5** Tal seems to be one step ahead of his opponent, at each turn...

**22.Bc5** ( Tal points out the following spectacular variation: 22.Bxe5 Rxd3 23.Kxd3 Bb5+ 24.Kd4 Na4 25.Kd5 Kf7 26.Bd4 Bf6 27.Bxf6 gxf6 28.Kd6 Rc6+ 29.Kd5 Rc7 30.Ne4 Rd7+ 31.Nd6+ Ke7 with mate to follow. Mating attacks in the ending are uncommon, but quite possible!

**22...Rxd3! 23.Kxd3 Bb5+ 24.Kc2 Na4 25.Kb3**

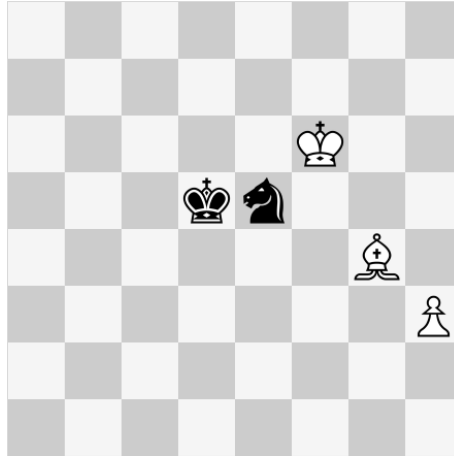
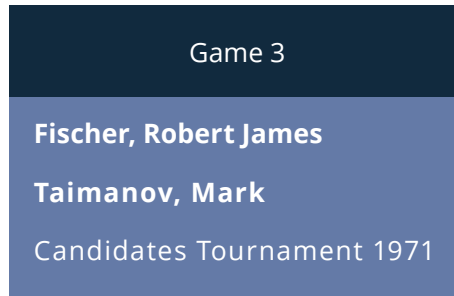
25.Kd1 loses in any case to 25...Bf6 , due to the embarrassment of White's bishop, which has taken up too great a burden.

**25...b6! 26.Nc4**

Not 26.Bxe7 Rc3+ 27.Ka2 Rc2+ 28.Kb1 ( 28.Kb3 Rb2# ) 28...Bd3 and ...Nc3+ - Black's three pieces work very efficiently!

**26...bxc5 27.Nxe5 cxb4 28.Rac1 Nc5+ 29.Kxb4 a6** A cautionary tale.

**0 - 1**



This is an excellent example of over-generalising the rule 'when in doubt, activate the king!'. Of course the most natural thing is to march towards White's pawn, but due to a subtle tactical issue this was actually the only way to lose: **81...Ke4 ?**

It was necessary to move the knight to d3, either here or after a preliminary king move: 81...Nd3 82.h4

An especially interesting line occurs following 82.Kg5 Ke5 83.h4 Nf4 84.Bf5 (all very natural) - of course, whereupon 84...Kd6 !? would take advantage of another feature of the position.

82.Kf5 Nf2 83.h4 Nxg4 84.Kxg4 Ke6

82...Nf4 83.Kf5 Ne6 is easily drawn as the king and knight have to go back and forth.

**82.Bc8 Kf4**

But now 82...Nd3 would lose to 83.Bf5+, so there is nothing to be done.

**83.h4 Nf3 84.h5 Ng5 85.Bf5 Nf3 86.h6 Ng5 87.Kg6 Nf3 88.h7 Ne5+ 89.Kf6**

The loss of this concretely drawn ending, understandable though it may be at the end of a long session (of course, knight endings can be somewhat counter-intuitive) was a most unfortunate occurrence for Taimanov, given the final score of the match (6-0! ). **1-0**

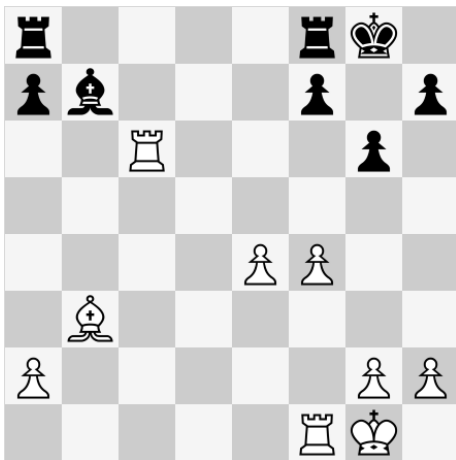


## Game 4

Jussupow, Artur

Timman, Jan

Candidates Tournament 1992



**23. Rc7** Of course not 23.Rc4? Ba6

**23...Bxe4 24.Re1 Rae8 25.Rxa7 Kg7**

As Dvoretsky observes, Jussupow's next move is inaccurate:

**26.Kf2**

26.g4, restraining Black's possibilities should be preferred, but White lets the chance slip.

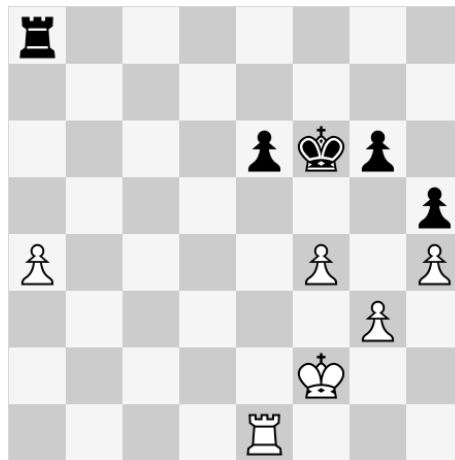
**26...h5 27.g3 Kf6 28.h3?**

A serious mistake; Black now gets the chance to unwind, especially by the manoeuvre ...Bf5-e6 to trade White's nuisance bishop.

28.Rd7 is good prophylaxis; Black's position is effectively frozen, so

White can prepare the advance of the a-pawn.

**28...Ra8 29.Rc7 Bf5 30.h4 Be6 31.Rc6 Rfc8 32.Rxc8 Rxc8 33.Bxe6 fxe6 34.a4 Ra8 (D)**



A critical moment is reached. Of course, 'every Russian schoolboy' knows that the rook belongs behind the passed pawn, but **35.Ra1** here costs White half a point!

35.Re4 is necessary - for one thing, maintaining the existence of Black's wretched e6-pawn. The situation on the kingside remains heavily favourable and White will be able to properly support his a-pawn, with the king; the position is winning for White.

**35...Ra5**

Black may as well stop the pawn advancing any further before exchanging the e- and f-pawns.

**36.Ke3 e5 37.Ke4 exf4 38.Kxf4**

Despite the favourable stance of the rooks, it's not possible to win this position as White's g-pawn is too vulnerable.

**38...Ke6 39.Ke4**

39.Re1+ Kf6 40.Re4 was a better winning attempt. 40...g5+

41.hxg5+ does contain a simple trick, but so long as Black responds 41...Kg6 (41...Rxc5 42.Re6+ Kxe6 43.Kxc5 is a loss.) 42.Rd4 Rf5+ 43.Ke4 Rxc5 this is no problem.

41.Ke3 however can, for instance, be met with 41...gxh4 42.gxh4 Kf5 whereupon White will be unable to make progress, eg 43.Rc4 Ke5 44.Kd3 Kd5 45.Kc3 Ra8 46.Rf4 Ke5 etc.

**39...g5 40.hxg5 Rxc5 41.Kf3 Ra5 42.Re1+ Kf5 43.Re4 Rc5 44.Re3 Ra5 45.Ra3 Ke5 46.Ke3 Ke6 47.Ke2 Kd6 48.Kf2 Ke6 49.Re3+ Kd5 50.Ra3 Ke6 51.Ke3 h4 52.g4 Kf6 53.Kf4 Kg6 54.Kf3 Kg5 55.Ra2 h3**

So, while it's good to know about these rules - in fact, without some general notions, or that 'default position' which was alluded to, a lot of time may needlessly be wasted reinventing the wheel. However, keep in mind the limitations of these ideas - they don't necessarily apply in every situation! Routine thinking is often punished severely, as we have seen in these four examples.

## SOLUTIONS



### SOLUTION 1

White is a pawn up, but must be accurate.

#### 1.Kg4!

1.Kh5? Kf4! 2.h3 Kg3 3.Kh6 Kh4!

1.h3? Kf4 is the same.

#### 1...Ke6

1...Ke4 2.h4! Ke5 3.Kh5!

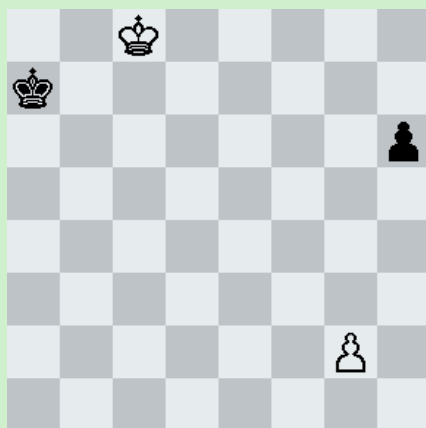
#### 2.Kh5! Kf7

2...Kf5 3.h4 + -

#### 3.Kh6 Kg8 4.h3!

4.h4 Kh8 with equal chances

4...Kh8 5.h4 Kg8 6.h5 Kh8 7.g6 hxg6 8.hxg6 + -



### SOLUTION 2

This time it is one pawn each, and since White is closer to the kingside, the question is when the king should go for the h-pawn - Black's king must not be allowed to reach the g-pawn.

#### 1.Kc7

1.Kd7 ? Kb6 2.Ke6 Kc5 3.Kf5 Kd4 4.Kg6 Ke4 with equal chances

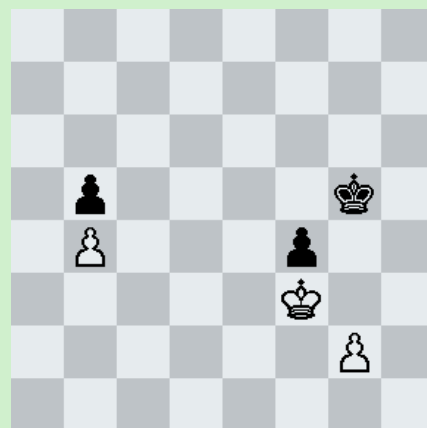
1...Ka6 2.Kc6 Ka5 3.Kc5 Ka4 4.Kc4 Ka3 5.Kc3 Ka2 6.Kc2 Ka3 7.g3!

7.g4 ? Kb4 8.Kd3 Kc5 9.Ke4 Kd6 10.Kf5 h5! with equal chances

#### 7...Kb4

7...Ka2 8.g4 Ka3 9.Kd3 Kb3 10.Ke4 Kc4 11.Kf5 Kd5 12.Kg6 + -

8.Kd3 Kc5 9.Ke4 Kd6 10.Kf5 Kd5 11.g4 + -



### SOLUTION 3

White must execute a delicate operation - Black's king will try and keep the opposition (close and distant), so if White carelessly goes towards Black's b-pawn, Black will gobble up White's g-pawn and both sides will queen. The win involves approaching the b-pawn, forcing Black's king to step on a square where White can take the distant opposition and return to the kingside to outflank.

#### 1.Ke4 Kg4 2.Kd5 Kh5

2...Kf5 3.Kd4 Kg5 4.Ke5 Kg4 5.Kf6 Kh4 6.Kf5 Kg3 7.Kg5

2...Kg3 3.Ke5 Kg4 4.Kf6 + -

2...Kh4 3.Kd4 Kh5 4.Kd5 + -

#### 3.Kc6! Kg5

3...Kh4 4.Kd6! Kg3 ( 4...Kg4 5.Ke6 ! )

5.Ke5 Kg4 6.Kf6 + -

3...Kg6 keeps the distant opposition,

but strays too far from the g-pawn.

4.Kxb5 Kf5 5.Kc6 Kg4 6.Kd5! Kg3  
7.Ke4 Kxg2 8.Kxf4 + –

**4.Kc5!**

( 4.Kxb5 ? Kg4 )

**4...Kg4**

( 4...Kh4 5.Kd4 Kh5 6.Kd5 )

**5.Kd6** Outflanking.

**5...Kh5 6.Kd5 Kh4**

6...Kg6 7.Ke4 Kg5 8.Ke5 7.Ke6 Kg5  
8.Ke5 Kg4 9.Kf6 Kg3 10.Kf5 + – \*



#### SOLUTION 4

White would like to push his a-pawn  
and stop the c-pawn:

**1.Kf5 Ke3**

1...c5 2.Ke5 Ke3 3.Kd5 Kd3 4.Kxc5 + –

**2.Ke5 c6**

2...Kd3 3.Kd5 c6+ 4.Kc5 Kc3 5.a4 + –

**3.a4 Kd3 4.a5 c5**

Black's pawn will reach the 7th rank  
- how can White utilise the queen to  
win?

**5.a6 c4 6.a7 c3 7.a8=Q c2 8.Qd5+!**

The only move to win.

8.Qe4+ ? Kd2 9.Qd4+ Ke2 10.Qc3 Kd1  
11.Qd3+ Kc1 12.Kd4 Kb2 13.Qd2 Kb1  
with equal chances

**8...Ke3**

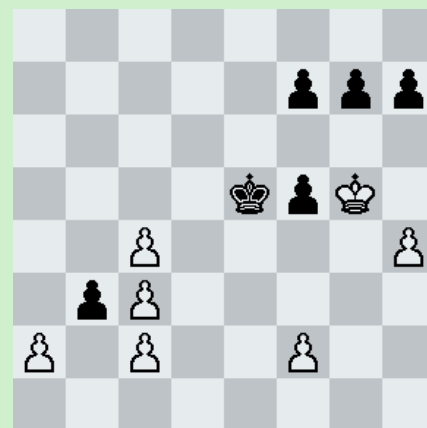
8...Kc3 9.Qd4+ Kb3 10.Qa1 + –

8...Ke2 9.Qa2! Kd1 10.Kd4 c1=Q 11.Kd3  
+ –

**9.Qg2! Kd3**

9...c1=Q 10.Qg5+ + –

**10.Qg5 + –**



#### SOLUTION 5

We can expect a tactical study from  
Wotawa, even with pawns only.

**1.axb3!**

1.f4+ ? Ke6 2.axb3 h6+ 3.Kh5 Ke7  
Black's idea becomes clear. 4.c5 Kf8  
5.c6 Kg8 6.c7 Kh7 7.c8=Q g6#

1.cxb3 ? h6+ 2.Kh5 Kd6 3.c5+ Kxc5  
4.b4+ Kd6 5.b5 Ke7 6.b6 Kf8 7.b7  
Kg8 8.b8=Q+ Kh7 and the same plan  
triumphs.

**1...h6+ 2.Kh5 Kd6!**

2...Ke6 ? 3.c5 Ke7 4.c6 Kd6 5.c4 Kxc6  
6.b4 is even losing for Black.

**3.c5+!** There is no time to waste. **3...  
Kxc5 4.c4 Kd6 5.c5+ Kxc5 6.c4 Kd6  
7.c5+ Kxc5 8.b4+ Kd6**

If 8...Kxb4 , 9.f4 with equal chances  
and Black must accept a draw by  
stalemate.



## SOLUTIONS

**9.b5 Ke7 10.b6 Kf8 11.b7 Kg8  
12.b8=Q+ Kh7 13.Qh8+**

( 13.Qg8+ = also draws. )

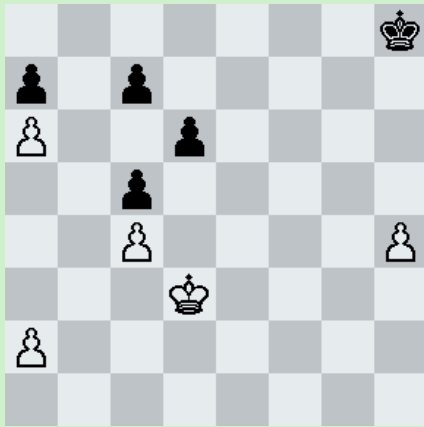
**13...Kxh8 14.f4 f6**

( 14...g6+ 15.Kxh6 Kg8 16.h5 with equal chances )

**15.Kg6 Kg8 16.Kxf5 Kf7 17.h5 g6+**

( 17...Ke8 18.Kg6 Kf8 19.f5 Kg8 )

**18.hxg6+ Kg7 19.Kg4 Kxg6 20.f5+  
Kf7 21.Kh5 Kg7 22.Kg4 =**



### SOLUTION 6

A complex situation - the number of pawns are equal, but White's a-pawns are blocked, and Black seems to have the advantage after 1...c6, since White can't save the h-pawn - how is the draw accomplished?

**1.Ke4**

( 1.Kc3 ? Kg7 2.Kb3 Kg6 3.Ka4 c6 4.Ka5 Kh5 5.a4 sets up a stalemate but Black can release it with 5...d5! 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Kb5 c4 - + )

**1...c6 2.Kf5! d5 3.Ke5 d4 4.Ke4 Kg7  
5.Kd3!**

5.Kf4 ? Kg6 6.Kg4 Kh6 7.a3 ( 7.h5 d3 8.Kf3 Kxh5 9.Ke3 Kg4 10.Kxd3 Kf3 - + ) 7...Kg6 8.h5+ Kh6 9.a4 d3 10.Kf3 Kxh5 11.Ke3 Kg4 12.Kxd3 Kf3 - +

**5...Kg6 6.Kc2 Kf5**

6...Kh5 7.Kb3 ( 7.Kb2 ? Kxh4 8.Kb3 d3 9.Kc3 Kg4 10.Kxd3 Kf3 - + )

7...Kxh4 ( 7...Kg4 8.h5 Kf3 9.h6 d3 10.Kc3! ( 10.h7 ? d2 11.h8=Q d1=Q+ 12.Kb2 Qd4+ ) 10...Ke2 11.h7 with equal chances )

7...d3 8.Kc3 Kxh4 9.Kxd3 Kg5 10.Ke4 Kf6 with equal chances ) 8.Ka4! d3! 9.Ka5! ( 9.Kb3 ? Kg4 10.Kc3 Kf4 11.Kxd3 Kf3 - + ) 9...d2 10.a4 d1=Q )

**7.h5!**

( 7.Kb3 ? Ke4 8.h5 d3 9.h6 Ke3 10.h7 d2 11.h8=Q d1=Q+ 12.Ka3 Qd3+ 13.Kb2 Qd4+ - + )

**7...Kg5 8.Kb3!**

( 8.h6 ? Kxh6 9.Kb3 d3 10.Kc3 Kg5 11.Kxd3 Kf4 - + )

**8...Kh6! 9.a3!**

9.Kc2 ? Kxh5 - +

9.Ka4 ? d3 10.Ka5 d2 11.a4 Kg5 12.h6 d1=Q - +

**9...Kg7 10.Kc2**

10.Ka4? Kh7 11.Ka5 ( 11.h6 d3 12.Kb3 Kxh6 13.Kc3 Kg5 14.Kxd3 Kf4 - + ) 11...d3 12.a4 d2 13.h6 Kg6 ! 14.h7 d1=Q - +

10.h6+? Kh7! - +

**10...Kh7**

10...Kf6 11.h6 ( 11.Kb2 ? Kg5 12.Kb3 Kh6 )

11...Kg6 12.h7! Kxh7 13.Kb3 d3 14.Kc3 Kg6 15.Kxd3 Kf5 16.Ke3 Ke5 17.a4 with equal chances

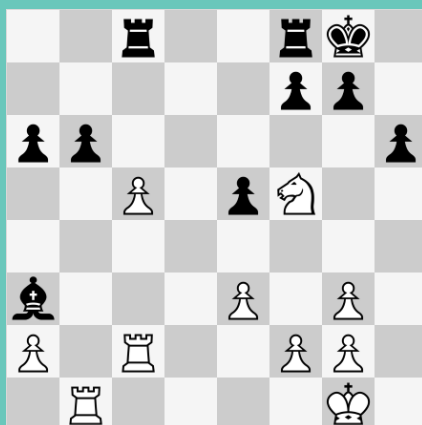
**11.Kb2 Kh6 12.Kb3**

Black has no more waiting moves: **12...Kxh5 13.Ka4!** and now the stalemate idea is successful.

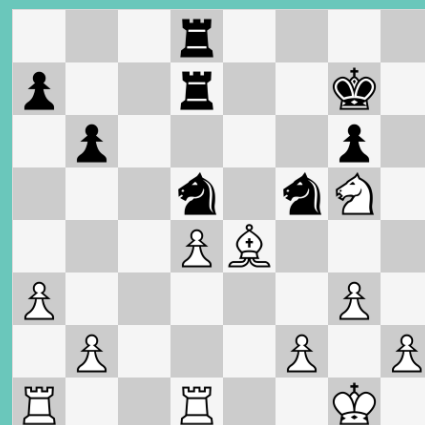
**13...d3 14.Ka5! d2 15.a4 d1=Q**



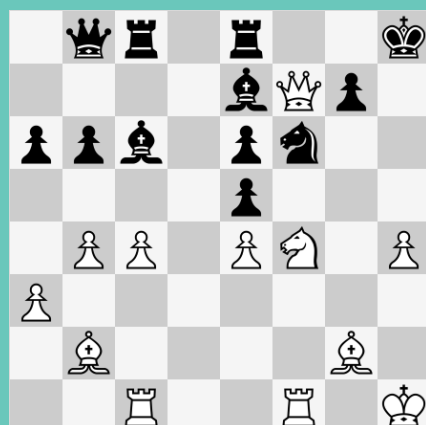
1. Nxf6+ Ke7 2. Nxd7



1. Ne7+ Kh8 2. Nxc8



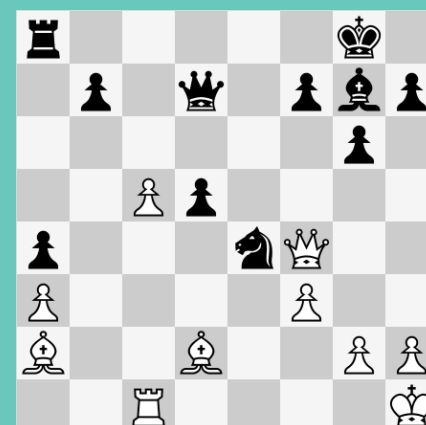
1. Ne6+ Kf7 2. Nxd8+



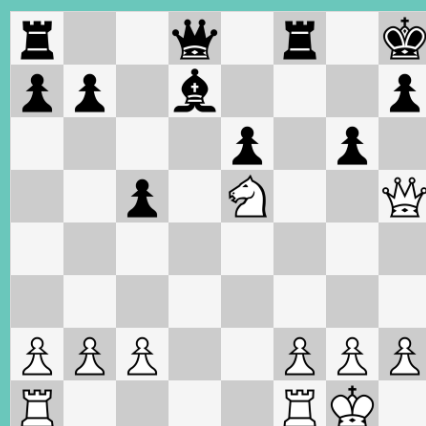
1. Ng6+ Kh7 2. Nxe7



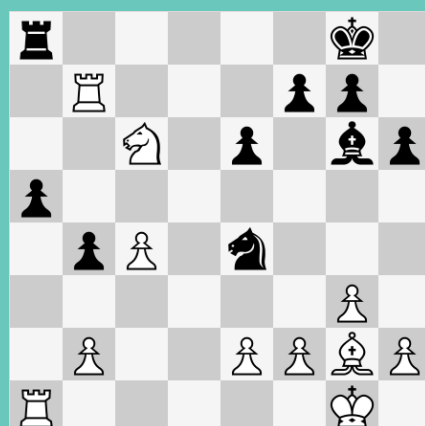
1. Nh6+ Kf8 2. Nxf7 Kxf7  
3. Bg4



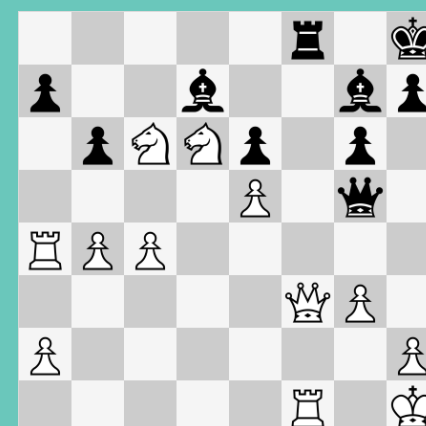
1. Nf2+ Kg1 2. Nd3 Qg3 3.  
Nxc1



1. Nxg6+ Kg8 2. Nxf8



1. Ne7+ Kh7 2. Nxg6 Kxg6  
3. Bxe4+



1. Qxf8+! Bxf8 2. Nf7+ Kg8  
3. Nxg5 Bxc6+ 4. Kg1

A close-up photograph of three chess pieces—a white king, a white pawn, and a dark rook—resting on a financial newspaper. The newspaper features a line graph with an orange line and various text elements, including 'Aktiemarkedet' and 'OMX Copenhagen 20'. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a professional and strategic atmosphere.

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